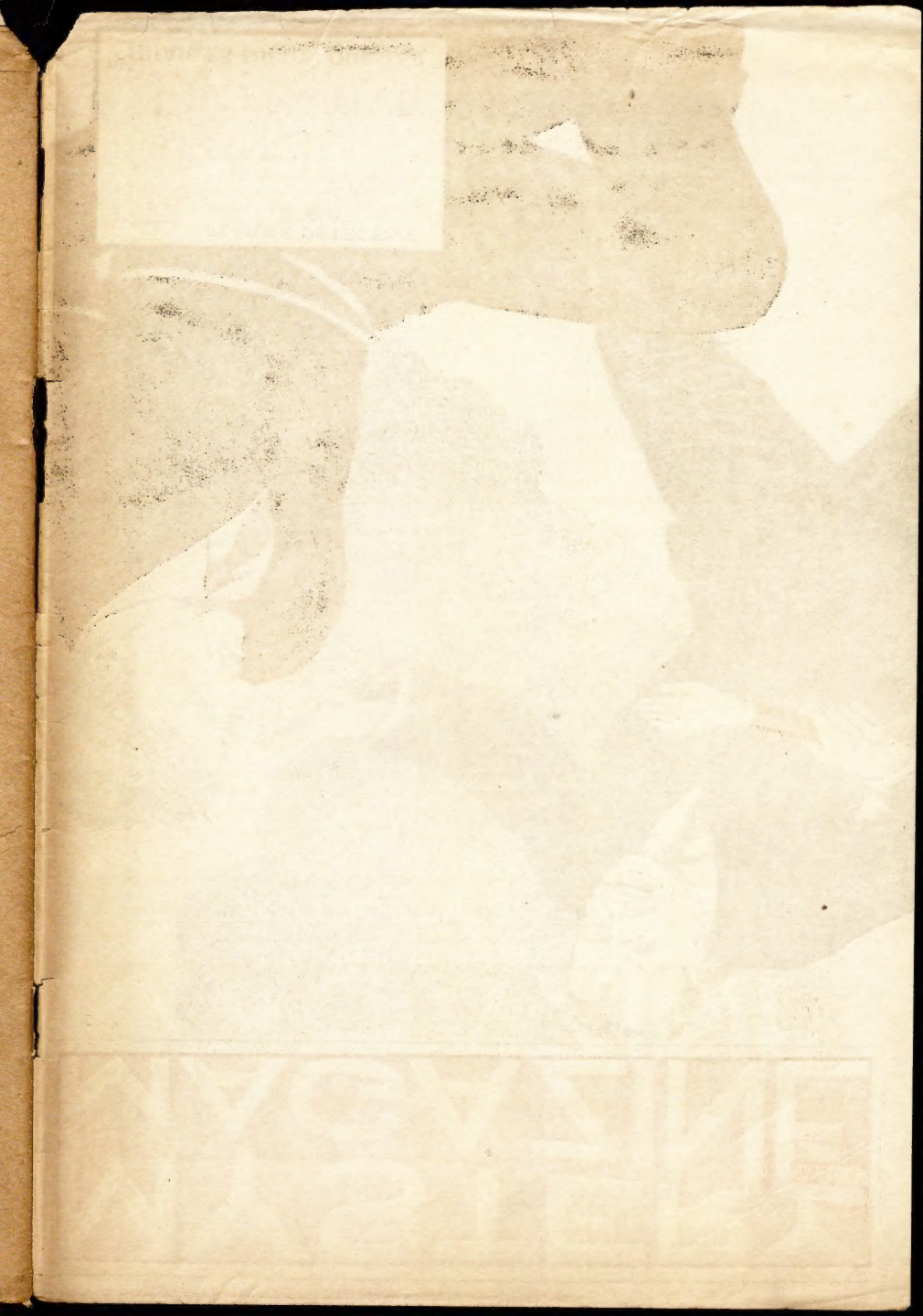
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

VOL. IV No. 91
AUGUST 15, 1921
PRICE 10 CENTS

FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The TRANCE DETECTIVE

BY CHARLES FULTON OURSLER



The Feature Story in No. 92 will be "FRIDAY AT 12." Get a Copy!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. IV. AUGUST 15, 1921. No. 91

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Published Twice a Month by

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street, New York

N. Hastings Wolff, Pres. E. Byrne, Treas.
Charles E. Nylander, Sec.

LU. SENARENS, Editor

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Domestic, Single Copy	10 Cents
Domestic, Yearly	$2.50
Canada	$2.75
Foreign	$3.00

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THE TRANCE DETECTIVE

By CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

CHAPTER ONE

DUSK was darkening the studio of Merlin, reader of palms.

It stole through the high vaulted Gothic windows, through the purple arabesque of old and priceless panes; it spread mysterious shadows in dark pools over the Persian prayer rugs strewn through the apartment; mysterious folds it added to the high flung draperies; the coiling vapor from a slowly swinging censer crept upward mysteriously in the gloom.

Turbanned in green, studded with golden ornaments, Merlin, the palmist, lay languidly upon a divan, drawing easily on a long pipe with a twisted stem. His eyes, large and luminous, were fixed intently on Astra, his dark-haired, beautiful assistant.

"The crime wave," he was saying, "is not what Detective Pinkerton said it was in last Sunday's paper."

"What did he say it was?" asked Astra quickly.

"He said it was the war after the war," explained Merlin. "He fancies that the amazing series of hold-ups, robberies, abductions, kidnappings, murders and worse crimes are a result of the reactions following the great conflict. He is quite hopelessly mistaken. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Like most men to whom we look for guidance in these troubled times, he has entirely missed the point. There is a far more simple and infinitely more sinister solution of the crime wave."

"You mean?" prompted Astra, for Merlin had paused and was gazing meditatively into space.

"I mean," declared Merlin with sudden vigor, "that there is brains behind this epidemic of crime. There is a directing force. Some master

criminal has inspired it. He is operating in this city right now. And there is some devilish design behind it all!"

"Is it possible?" breathed Astra. "It doesn't seem credible."

"Look!" said Merlin, pointing.

A little globe of light had suddenly appeared in one corner of the room. It was a secret signal that someone was at the outer door; a signal given involuntarily and unwittingly by the caller himself, when his foot touched the door mat. Astra, with a wry grimace, for it had been a long and wearisome afternoon of palm readings, slipped into the outer room, while Merlin rose and pushed back a small shutter in the floor. This shutter formed a window immediately over the vestibule below it, and while the caller waited for an answer to his ring, Merlin could watch him, entirely unobserved.

A peculiar look crossed the face of the palmist as he beheld his visitor. There was a light in the vestibule which shed its rays directly on the man's face. One look was sufficient for Merlin; noiselessly he closed the shutter and settled himself back on the divan. But there was now a twinkle of anticipation in his eyes, as if, indeed, he expected some entertainment from his client.

He knew what was happening. His Hindu serving man was admitting the visitor. The latter would be conducted upstairs and into the outer room, where Astra sat in waiting. If he insisted on an interpretation from the master Merlin himself, he would have to pay three times as much. And if Merlin's suspicions were correct, he wouldn't stop at the money; he would demand to be served by no one other than Merlin.

With startling promptness this surmise was justified. From the outer room came the sounds of an old man's querulous voice lifted in annoyed protestation.

"I don't care if he is tired," cried the old man testily. "I come here to get my hand read by Merlin and Merlin's the man I want."

Almost immediately afterward Astra thrust back the curtains gently, and the old man stood in the doorway.

He was a quite remarkable old gentleman, small and wizened, with a frizzled brow, and sunken cheeks in which time and care had cut many cruel rimples. But his eyes, even in the gloaming shadows, glittered brightly like a bird's. He clutched a stout cane, which he held elevated a little to one side of him, as if he meant to push aside all obstructions to his purpose.

"Mr. Merlin?" he demanded.

"Yes!" returned Merlin languidly. "Do I understand you to mean that you are here for a reading?"

"Exactly. I want you to read my palm and tell me the truth about things."

"Do you understand that my fee is fifty dollars, after hours?"

"Confound the fifty dollars! I want my palm read."

Merlin smiled ever so slightly to himself as he rose, turned on a group of soft orange lights, and invited the visitor to a chair. He attempted to take his cane, but the old man refused to part with it. He had given his overcoat and hat to the valet, but the cane he would not, under any circumstances, surrender. It looked as if he thought he might need it for self-protection.

On this, however, Merlin did not comment. He drew up his chair, with a small table between them, and invited the old man to lay his right hand on a small velvet cushion on the table. He switched on a bright light on a tiny stem at the edge of the table, and focussed its glare directly on the seared and shrivelled palm that trembled with the palsy of age at his touch. Over its mounts and lines he bent in earnest scrutiny.

"I see!" murmured the palmist, half aloud. "Big bump under the forefinger; a Jupiterian, undoubtedly. Lots of ambition, if ever really awakened. No little finger bump to speak of; therefore no money making proclivities whatever. But a very enlarged mount of Apollo. Hum!"

"Don't you pay any attention to the heart line, the life line, the fate line?" questioned the old man querulously.

"Tut!" murmured Merlin reprovingly. "We shall come to the lines presently. Chirognomy must always precede chiromancy; otherwise your reading is upside-down. It is like reading the last chapter of the book first. You can't really understand it—oh, dear me! Just look at that!"

"Just look at what?" cried the old man jumpily.

"That scar of Satan, as it is called, right under Solomon's wishing ring, across from the plane of Mars. That is a highly significant indication—my dear Mr. Bland!"

"Bland!" cried the old man shrilly. "How the devil did you know—what do you call me Bland for?"

"Because that is your name," retorted Merlin evenly. "Isn't it?"

"No!"

"Excuse me. Your name is Henry Bland. You are a city detective. You came here to try me out. How do you like it?"

The old man did not reply. Instead, he put his fingers to his lips and whistled loudly. Then he sat back with a smirking grin upon his face. But he noticed that Merlin also was smiling.

"You have whistled in vain," said the palmist. "You will get no response from your men until I am ready that you shall. In the meantime——"

Merlin leaned forward suddenly and snatched up the arm of the old detective. Taken by surprise, the astonished Bland made no resistance. In that one moment Merlin got possession of the old man's cane and held it up to the light.

It was a cane as extraordinary as its owner. For a top, it had an ivory hand of beautiful proportions, and very life-like, and in contrast to the dull glow of its ebony support it gained in luster and attractiveness

"Damn you!" cried the old man. "Give me that cane!"

He made a dart around the table and grabbed it with clutching fingers from the young palmist's unresisting hands. The latter smiled back at him, unperturbed.

"I have just read the palm of your ivory hand," he said mockingly. "It told me wonderful secrets."

The old man was glowering at him darkly. Merlin stood there in quiet repose for one moment, and then he concluded:

"This, my studio, is a place of mysteries, believe me, my dear Detective Bland. You may have secreted a dozen policemen in the hallway—for what purpose I cannot surmise—but they cannot reach me here so long as my foot does not release the springs beneath this carpet by which the bolts of my mechanical doors are controlled. They are locked. I am going to unlock them now and let your policemen come in."

"What does an honest man want with arrangements like that?" sneered Detective Bland.

"That," snapped Merlin, "is distinctly my business."

At the same moment he tapped his foot briskly. A moment later Astra, her lovely face showing every indication of extreme fright, rushed into the room.

"The police!" she gasped. "What do they want?"

Merlin made an almost imperceptible sign, and Astra obediently slipped across the room and disappeared behind some draperies. She had barely gone when half a dozen policemen lumbered through the doorway and stood looking expectantly at Detective Bland.

"Search this place!" commanded Bland crisply, at the same time thrusting a search warrant impudently beneath the nose of the palmist. The latter waved him aside. In consternation he beheld his beautiful and costly apartment being ransacked by vandals with no more conscience than a raiding party of Bolsheviks.

"What is the charge?" he asked, finally, of Bland.

"The crime wave!" cried old Bland, with an intensity almost tigerish. "The crime wave, Mr. Palmist. Down at headquarters we have come to a new theory about the crime wave. We believe there is a directing brain, a master intelligence, behind the whole business. That's why I am here!"

"Indeed!" murmured Merlin, with a cryptic smile. The crime wave! Odd that he had been talking to Astra about it, discussing the identical theory, not fifteen minutes before! What did it all mean? Merlin's speculations were interrupted by simultaneous shouts of triumph from two different corners of the room. Two policemen came dashing up to the gratified Bland, their hands crammed with glittering jewels.

"This is the swag from the DeRivas dance robbery!" cried one.

"Here is the very pearl necklace that was swiped from old lady Monnighuysen!" cried the other.

Merlin beheld this with a bewildered stare. It was impossible! Yet there it was, and the crackling fires of gloating satisfaction in the eyes of Detective Bland left him no room for doubt. The jewels were real. They must be what the police said they were.

He opened his mouth, about to speak, but was prevented. Other policemen were crowding forward. From all parts of the room they were bringing out bags of money and jewels!

"It's the richest cache in the town!" exulted Bland. "Merlin, you're under arrest. Hold out your hands. I charge you—with the crime wave!"

If he expected a struggle, or an outburst, he was mistaken. Merlin was deadly white. Without a word of protest, he held up his wrists and submitted to the indignity of handcuffs. And not until they were locked securely did he look across the room into a wide pier glass set in the wall. At one point in the glass he looked, knowing full well what he would see.

Astra's face, white with tears, was looking at him there—reflected from her place of concealment, and visible only in that particular glass. Her eyes looked mute, despairing questions at Merlin.

And then Merlin smiled—confidently, bravely.

"My dear Bland," he said gravely, "hurry and get me behind the bars. I feel a trance coming on—and I do wonderful things in a trance!"

"Oh, hell!" snapped Bland impatiently. "Come on, boys—let's go!"

Nevertheless, he kept a very careful watch on his prisoner on his way to the station house. He had left two of his men, to find the valet and Astra, place them under arrest as accomplices, and come along later. At this Merlin smiled to himself oddly. He knew perfectly well that they might search all night long in vain—they would never find Astra now.

There were very few preliminaries at the station house. Merlin was asked a great many questions; it was decided that after dinner he would be given a lengthy examination. He knew that meant the third degree. And again he smiled wisely to himself. He suffered them to examine his clothing—Bland had allowed him to change from his studio costume before they departed—and then they took him to a cell. Determined that nothing should mar his capture, Bland accompanied him to the very door and saw it heavily barred and locked securely.

Then he thrust his withered old face maliciously against the bars.

"Going into your trance now, you cheap bum?" he demanded.

Then he staggered back, with a hoarse gasp.

Merlin was gone! The cell was utterly empty! The palmist had suddenly, instantly, completely disappeared!

CHAPTER TWO

ASTRA had known what to do when they bore Merlin away. By imperceptible but perfectly understood signals, he had directed her to slip through a hidden and well-nigh indiscoverable door, down a short flight of stairs, and into the street. Thence she had called a cab and had herself driven to a quiet house in the lower part of the city. There she would wait until Merlin got word to her.

That she would not wait long she felt certain. Merlin was too capable, too far-sighted to be long inconvenienced by his sudden and extraordinary arrest. Yet Astra was undeniably worried. Although she had never given the palmist the smallest indication of the fact, indeed had never even admitted it to herself, it was nevertheless true that she held him very tenderly in the secret meditations of her heart. Love would have blossomed very quickly there, had it been encouraged. But Astra had steadfastly repressed the promptings of her emotions; love and Merlin seemed so immeasurably separate. Merlin was a mystic, and mystics are supposed not to have hearts or emotions, but merely supremely developed mental powers. So Astra thrust back her impulses and quietly listened to all that Merlin told her to do; she made herself very friendly, but always in a cool and detached manner. Sometimes it seemed to irritate Merlin, but that only made Astra the more determined to keep on doing the same thing.

Now, however, when she was removed from his immediate influence; when he had been arrested, charged with a most serious offense, after a bushel of precious loot had been found in his rooms, she did not find it easy to moderate her feelings. In Merlin she reposed the most confiding and positive trust. If all the jewels in India had been found in his apartment, she would have believed him innocent. She knew he was an honest man, but, as she thought it over in the quiet house to which he had sometimes obliged her to retire for a week or more while he was absent on some enterprise, she remembered also that he was, in more ways than reading palms, a mysterious man.

Rapidly she glanced back over the two years she had been associated with him. Astra was a daughter of a wealthy family that had been ruined as a result of the industrial restrictions during the war. Her mother had died years before; her father committed suicide in a fit of despondency following the wreck of his fortune. That had left Astra alone in the world. She had obtained a position in one of the bureaus at Washington, and one night at a charity ball she had met Merlin. Later, at a Red Cross bazaar, she had served on a committee with him and had come to know him rather well. As a result, a brief intimacy developed, out of which came his offer of a position with him in his palm-reading studios in one of the great port cities of the East. Unconventional as was the proposition, Astra had accepted it, for the war was over, she must support herself, and positions were getting scarcer all the time.

In his elaborate studios he had invariably treated her with the most devoted courtesy, and from being a mere attendant she had speedily become an accomplished palmist. Under Merlin's earnest tuition, she had learned easily to interpret character out of the lines, crosses, whorls and mounts of the human hand. In spite of the wide contrast between such employment and her almost cloistered upbringing, Astra had found the work fascinating. This had gone on for two years, and in those two years Astra had secretly learned to respect and almost to love her employer. She was very close to loving him, now that they had thrown him in jail.

Yet, after all, what did she know about him? She knew that he was high-minded, generous, kind—and that he made cryptic remarks, sometimes entertained secretly most villainous-looking men and women with whom he held long interviews, that for weeks on end he would disappear, after despatching her to live with two old family servants in this little by-street house where she sat waiting now. What did he meet those evil-faced men and women for, she asked herself. And why did he go away so suddenly? What did he do when he went away?

On matters such as this she sat brooding that evening following the arrest of Merlin. She was in a little bedroom on the second floor, seated in an old-fashioned rocking-chair, some knitting work idle in her lap. Her eyes were looking away into unfathomable space, wondering what was happening to Merlin and what legal assistance he could command to get him free again. Suddenly a shadow fell across the floor at her feet.

It was a long, lean shadow, like the distorted figure of a man—as if, indeed, a man stood directly behind her! With a little cry she turned and looked over her shoulder.

Merlin was standing beside her!

"Astra," he cried laughingly. "They are looking for me all over the jail. They are trying to find how I got out. Well, let them. I've got other things to do!"

She got up nervously, her lips trembling so that at first she was unable to speak. But her eyes, glistening and glad, showed how happy she was to see him again.

"What does it all mean?" she faltered.

"It means," he said seriously, "that there is going to be the very devil to pay in this town tonight." He drew up a chair close to her, and looked at her with a companionable, winning smile. A very different man, this marvelously escaped fugitive from justice, with his Fedora drawn down at a rakish angle over his eyes, and his overcoat collar turned up, as if he had found the November night winds chilly—a very different man from the garish, turbanned palmist of the studio.

"Now, Astra," he continued, "I'm going to tell you to-night some news that will surprise you. I am not really a palmist!"

"Not a palmist?" she repeated dazedly.

"No! Do you suppose that any real man would waste his life with a game like that? Oh, I know palmistry, and I can read hands. The work's genuine, all right! But I want to do a man's work in the world! I've been a detective for ten years!"

He sat back, enjoying her astonishment, until, recalled to himself, he glanced hurriedly at his watch and went on:

"What I told you this afternoon about the crime wave—that there was a design behind it; that it had a motive, a purpose, and a master criminal who was directing it like a general plotting a campaign—was absolute truth. I have been working on the case for a year. Unfortunately, something leaked, and the criminals found out that I was on their trail. During my absence, and most probably by bribing Hanshu, my waiting man, they planted a lot of their loot in my rooms and then sent a tip to headquarters. That was the explanation of that raid this afternoon—staged at the most critical moment, because I intend to bag the whole bunch of them to-night. That's why I had to escape the jail in such a hurry!"

"How did you manage it?" asked Astra eagerly.

"Never mind that now. We've got work to do. I need some one with me to-night—there is just a little bit of danger connected with it, but I can keep you out of that. Would you come with me?"

She blushed, but her eyes danced as she looked at him.

"I'd love to help you!" she cried, and her lashes fell in her embarrassment. He gave a nervous little laugh, seemed about to say something, but decided not to, and reached for her coat on a clotheshorse.

"Come!" he said grimly. "I have everything in readiness below!"

When they emerged into the wind-swept, darkened street his high-powered automobile was drawn up at the curb. Into this Merlin assisted Astra, and waved his hand, without a word, to the chauffeur. The machine turned sharply and sped off. Astra did not ask Merlin whither they were bound; she knew the palmist's moods too well to question him now. But she watched from the windows and was surprised to find they were pursuing a highway that led out of the southernmost part of the city into the country. Presently the houses and the lights of the town were behind them; they were scudding along past open fields, orchards and an occasional farmhouse. When the car finally stopped Astra shuddered.

They were at the entrance of a graveyard!

And now for the first time Merlin spoke.

"Astra," he said soberly, "I have strange work to do in this cemetery. Perhaps I am going into a trance among the graves! You must not seek to discover what I am doing behind those walls. The chauffeur is Deering, my personal valet—he was muffled, so you did not recognize him. He is going with me. I want you to remain here. If you see any one—any one or anything—go through those gates after we have entered, fire this!"

He placed a small revolver in her hands. It was the first weapon she had ever actually touched in her life, but she took it from him without a tremor. Whatever was the meaning of this strange charade, she would play the part he assigned her bravely. But her courage received a shock when she beheld his next action.

Lifting the rugs that were piled in one corner of the car, he disclosed a bundle of tools. A pick and a spade lay on the floor. He lifted them and passed them without a word to the driver, who was standing outside. Then he turned and smiled confidently at Astra. The next moment they were gone.

What did it mean? What could it mean? In a daze, Astra asked herself those questions. Ghastly suspicions raised themselves and would not be downed. What purpose had honest men, even if they were detectives, in a graveyard at night with picks and spades? Why had he given her that pistol? Why was he so anxious to avoid discovery? And what had he meant by trances?

There was another mystery regarding Merlin which suddenly occurred to her. Astra looked at the dark and gloomy walls that surrounded the graveyard, at the grim iron gate, at the shuddering elms and the nodding weeping willows, at the dark sky; she hearkened to the soughing of the impatient wind through the treetops. Trances! Ah, yes, she remembered them! Merlin went into trances!

She had seen him in his studio, pale and staring and unconscious, many, many times, and the taciturn Deering, the man that was now with him at his mysterious labors in the tomb-garden, had warned her never to disturb him when she found him thus. Merlin went into trances! And now he had hinted he might be going into a trance among the graves! What ghastly, eerie mystery was here?

She shuddered, in spite of her attempt at self-possession. Astra was a normal-minded girl, with the nerves of her sex. She was beginning to find the lonesomeness, the terror of her thoughts, the blear, eerie surroundings horribly oppressive. A lump had risen in her throat; her breath was coming in short, quick gasps; beads of perspiration were on her brow. And then, suddenly, she forgot all her personal fright in the new fear that clutched her.

A shadow had darkened the roadside; something small, something dark, something nimble and hasty and furtive, something shapeless and fierce, had darted from behind the car and scurried through the gate.

For a moment she could not act; for an agon-

ized second her palsied hand was paralyzed; for a moment she could not summon power enough to lift the revolver, to press against its trigger. She gasped in her struggle against her own weakness; then she thrust the weapon through the open window of the car and fired!

The echo of the shot cracked and resounded back and forth among the white and glaring tombstones. Fluttering with fear, unable to endure her solitary vigil any longer, Astra leaped to the roadway and rushed to the wide-flung entrance to the cemetery, but on its threshold she stood, frozen, unable to move forward another step, utterly appalled and amazed.

Merlin held a corpse in his arms and was lowering it into a newly opened grave!

Deering was on his knees, crawling among the tombstones, as if he had suddenly gone insane!

CHAPTER THREE

THAT was the first and only time in Astra's life that she fainted.

When she came back to consciousness she was in the car again; they were speeding rapidly back to the city, and her head was supported on Merlin's arm as he tenderly bathed her forehead with his handkerchief. His eyes were troubled and remorseful, and an immense relief came into his face when he saw that she was again conscious.

"Forgive me, Astra!" he begged. "I was a brute to drag you into this!"

"Did you catch it—that thing?" she asked anxiously, sitting up and fingering at her disordered hair.

"No! It got away! But don't worry about that. I'm going to take you back——"

"Please!" she interrupted him imploringly. "Let me stay with you and see it through. I'll promise never to faint again!"

But it required more than that to convince Merlin. He refused her firmly. He told her there was grim work to be done, and that he would not dream of exposing her to any danger. Not until she had exhausted all her feminine store of appeal did he capitulate. And then he made it clear that he was going to place her where no harm could possibly come to her. He reminded her, too, that she had disobeyed his explicit instructions in leaving the car; that if she again disregarded orders, it would be her last trip on a detective expedition. Contritely Astra promised, and turned to see where they were stopping. For the car had drawn up at a corner drugstore.

"You may come with me now," said Merlin. "There will be no danger for an hour yet, as I calculate it."

They were in a middle-class, residential section, with rows of little red-brick, marble-stepped houses in all directions. Merlin led the way to one of these in the middle of the block, and rang the bell. They heard a sluggish footstep inside, and when the door opened a wan, white-faced little boy peered at them. There were plain evidences that recently he had been crying.

"Is Commissioner Holmes in?" asked Merlin.

"Naw. He's jist gone out," answered the boy, a trace of recent sobbing in the shrill falsetto of his voice.

"Did he go back to headquarters?"

"Naw. He ain't never going back there. They broke him! He's canned!" cried the boy, ready to sob.

"They got him, eh?" There was no surprise in Merlin's voice. "Well, he's a good father, just the same, isn't he?"

"He's more'n that!" shrilled the little boy, opening the door wider and standing clearly before them. They saw that he was crippled and supported by a crutch. "He's more'n that! He was the best commishner this town ever had. They been yellin' at him ever since the crime wave got going, but he done as good as any cop could 'a' done. He's a good dad, but he's a better commishner!"

The flaming loyalty that glowed on the little crippled chap's face was inspiring to behold. It gave a glow to both Merlin and the beautiful Astra.

"I think you are right!" said the palmist. "Where did your daddy go? Did he say?"

"Naw!" answered the little fellow. "He didn't say!"

Merlin politely thanked him and led Astra away. On their way back to the auto Merlin rapidly explained something of the import of the interview to the wondering girl.

"That little crippled boy is the one redeeming influence in the life of Police Commissioner Holmes," he explained. "Holmes hasn't many friends, but he has a true one in that little boy. What fire was in that kid's eyes when he defended his dad! Too bad he's crippled that way. It almost seemed like the judgment of Heaven on Holmes. One day he was riding in a parade, and rode down an old blind beggar woman with his horse. If he had been only decently careful he could have avoided that accident. That was ten years ago, just after his little boy was born. The boy grew up, and was himself run down by a runaway horse and badly crippled. His mother was dead; he was all that was left to Holmes, and the accident made the commissioner harder in his dealings with men than ever. The only human being he is ever kind to is that crippled kid of his. Still, I am sorry they broke him at headquarters. He did his best with the crime wave; he never had brains enough to fight it!"

By this time they had regained the cab, and Merlin assisted Astra to enter. Then he said to her:

"I am going into this drugstore to telephone. I must locate Holmes at once. He is important to us in our plans to-night. Wait for me here, and do not, under any circumstances, get out of the car."

She promised, and Merlin, after a hasty word to Deering, the chauffeur, who sat muffled and grim at the wheel, entered the booth in the drug-store. From his position at the mouth of the instrument Merlin was enabled to watch the car through windows, a fact which made him feel more comfortable, for he feared intrigue on every hand this night.

Three telephone calls resulted in failure. Nowhere could he locate the deposed commissioner. With a worried frown he emerged from the booth and returned to the car, but as he stood on the sidewalk he staggered in shocked bewilderment.

Fallen over the steering wheel, stabbed, lay Deering, in the last feeble struggles of death!

The car doors were flung wide open, but the machine was empty.

Deering was murdered, and where was Astra?

CHAPTER FOUR

LEVEL-HEADED, poised, habitually detached from excitement as he was, Merlin reeled at the shock.

Deering, his trusted assistant, a companion with whom he had shared danger and the grim pleasure of the chase for years, struck down by an assassin! That cut the palmist detective to the heart. But worse—infinitely worse—was the disappearance of Astra. In that wild moment of dazed surprise he realized what she meant to him. He knew all at once that he loved her. Before the terrible knowledge that she was in the hands of his enemies—for Merlin never doubted for a moment that they had abducted the girl for their own purposes—all else shrunk into insignificance. With an impetuous leap he was at Deering's side, lifting his face in the hope of extracting some clue from his lips before he expired.

"Deering, old pal!" he breathed. "Try to tell me something! What happened?"

The dying man heard him. An agonized look crossed his features as he struggled desperately to speak. His lips moved inarticulately; his swollen tongue lifted and fell back; he gave a last, pitiful look up at his chief, and a glazing overspread his stricken eyes. Deering was dead.

Baffled and forsaken, Merlin drew back. Already a crowd was collecting, and a policeman forced his way to Merlin's side. In a gruff, startled voice he demanded to know what had happened.

Merlin realized that he was in a corner. The law was represented by this policeman, and the law was in the presence of crime. If the usual formalities followed, Merlin must accompany the bluecoat to the station house, where he would immediately be recognized as a fugitive himself, found at the scene of a murder. He felt no fears of being long incarcerated; he had already demonstrated his ability to escape when necessary, but the delay would be fatal.

If he would save Astra he must act quickly. Also, if he would capture his men, he must not himself be captured. For even in the excitement of Astra's disappearance, and his determination to rescue her at all hazards, he did not lose sight of his quarry. Merlin meant to find Astra, but he meant also to get at the brains of the crime wave, too.

The policeman was staring at him accusingly, frowningly, demanding an answer to his question. The crowd around them was growing every moment. Merlin came to a quick decision.

"This is my chauffeur," he said to the policeman. "He was attacked while I was in that drug-store. I do not think he is dead; he has merely fainted. Help me get him into the drugstore, and we can see what can be done."

With such a crisp air of authority did he speak, with such a positive assumption of command that the rather bewildered policeman did not have time to question the proposal. Before he quite knew what he was doing, Merlin had drawn closer to the dead chauffeur and started to lift him from his seat at the wheel. To do this he got the body in front of him, holding it by the shoulders and allowing the policeman to seize the legs. The next moment he thrust forward the body until it had fallen right over on the policeman, the head dropping over his shoulders, the arms dangling at the side.

The astonished policeman staggered back under the unexpected burden, and that gave Merlin his opportunity. He turned, still standing, and clamped down his foot, the motor responding instantly beneath the terrific impetus. Away shot the car, leaving a hoarsely shouting crowd and a staggering policeman with a dead man in his arms.

Merlin could hear the crowd breaking and running with wild hoots and yells. He doubted not they would soon be after him in commandeered machines, but they would have to go like the wind to catch him. In all the city there was no swifter car than his, and he knew just where he was bound.

Around the corner he dashed, up one street, around another corner, until the tumult and the shouting was lost on the quiet of the neighborhood. But his pace never slackened as he kept darting in one thoroughfare and out of another, until in all he had covered perhaps ten miles. He drew up to the curb and halted. Far off on the stillness he could hear the hum of several motors. They were after him then, close on his heels. Well, let them catch him if they could!

Quickly he got out of the car; then reaching in with his hand, he pressed down again, and started the machine. Alone it scurried down the street, unguided, unoccupied, gathering speed with every revolution of its wheels. Merlin watched and waited.

This was a by-street, running steeply downhill to the edge of a water course, nearly a hundred feet below. There was no bridge, no con-

crete fence, nothing but a graveled walk at the edge of the precipice, with red lamps to warn motorists that the street ended in a cliff. The car shot on, headed straight for the edge of the abyss, came to it, dipped and wavered and fell over. There was a distant, booming crash, and the hiss of steam.

As Merlin stepped back into the shadow of a tree, two cars lumbered down and came to a standstill. Three policemen got out of one, a group of plain-clothes men from the other. They looked about them in bewilderment; one pointed to the edge of the precipice. They talked in low tones, as men do when they behold a tragedy. Carefully they walked to the edge and looked over. In their minds there was no doubt their fugitive lay beneath the almost inaccessible wreckage there below.

And while they stood there looking, Merlin stole swiftly up the street, boarded a street car, and was on his way about the pressing and dangerous business which now obsessed him.

He had sacrificed a ten-thousand-dollar motor car, but he was free to rescue the woman that now he loved better than anything else in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE street car took Merlin within a block of his studio, and it was to that deserted suite of rooms that the palmist now hurried, eager to secure the only means by which he meant to find Astra.

When a woman is captured, kidnaped, in a large city, and no one knows where she has been taken to, or where her abductors, the search is always long and generally fruitless. Many abducted persons are never found; when they are it is only after long and laborious search. This is so because most cases of this kind are still handled by old-fashioned detectives, working with old-fashioned, worn-out methods, whose ineffectiveness is demonstrated by the result. It was because he did not use old-fashioned devices in his detective work; because he utilized the latest discoveries in science, that Merlin had raised himself to such undisclosed but brilliant eminence in his profession.

In his studio there was a device by which he felt certain he could track out Astra and her abductors. And her abductors, he felt certain, were the very men he should try to convict as the power behind the crime wave, although their motive in stealing Astra was not yet clear to the palmist.

With ease he found his way in the dark through his rooms, and came at last to a little locked cabinet. Securing the key from a hidden recess, he opened the cabinet and removed a small, basket-like arrangement, much like an ether bag and equipped with straps and buckles. Inside this there was something that looked like a small motor. It was with this instrument that he meant to find the missing Astra. Pocketing it carefully, he was about to slip from his room when he heard a slight sound; the next instant a hand touched his own, and something was left in his palm; then he heard the sound of pattering feet racing from the room.

Swiftly he darted after; in hot pursuit he leaped through room after room, but before he could catch up with those pattering footfalls they were gone, and he heard the slam of a door. Cursing his luck, he hurried back into the inner studio and turned on a small light. There was a folded sheet of paper in his hand, and spreading it open, he saw that it was a message, in printed characters, which read:

"You cannot save Holmes. We must go through with what we have to do. We have your girl. If you make another move to block us, we will kill her!"

There was no signature. But none was needed. Merlin knew full well from whom it came, and now he knew why they had seized Astra. Poor Deering, in attempting to save her, had undoubtedly met his death at their hands.

Merlin's jaw was set in straight lines; his brows were tangled in an ominous frown, his fists were clenched, and in his eyes glittered the foxfires of fury as he stalked through his studio and into the street. Walking very swiftly, he traversed three blocks and came to a stable, out of which he roused a bright-eyed Irish hostler.

"I want to take Beauty for a walk," said Merlin, forcing a smile.

"Yis, sor," agreed Mike, and came out with a seek, powerful bloodhound tugging at its leash. The dog greeted Merlin with every sign of demonstrative affection. Merlin gave her a friendly slap, and then swiftly adjusted the instrument he had brought with him over the head of the animal, fastening its buckles with the greatest care. When this was securely affixed he reached for a tiny screw set in the side of the extraordinary muzzle and turned it. A low throbbing noise was instantly heard.

"What a funny-lookin' muzzle!" commented Pat. "What's all that contraption for?"

"Just for luck," answered Merlin smilingly. "Good-night. It will be late when I get back!"

And so Mike was not told the real purpose of that singular dog muzzle. He did not know that the motor concealed within, with its whizzing and whirring, was to the dog's sensitive nostrils exactly what a microscope is to the eye of a human being; that it magnified each smell placed within its radix a hundredfold, excluding all others with which it was surrounded; that one scent placed within its influence would stand out and could be trailed, cleanly and clearly, through all the thousand stenches and odors with which the air of a city is infested.

Nor did Mike, the hostler, see what followed when Merlin and the dog were around the corner from the stable, when Merlin bent down and held

a woman's handkerchief against the porous front of the muzzle.

"Go find her, Beauty!" begged the palmist. "Find Astra for me!"

The dog straightened up, every muscle of its body quivering with excitement. A moment or two it stood there as Merlin slowly withdrew the handkerchief; it sniffed the air hungrily, then slowly began moving in a circle that widened and widened. Suddenly it darted to one side, almost jerking the detective from his feet, and away it raced impetuously forward.

Beauty had picked up Astra's trail! And Merlin knew that the dog would follow it, around the earth if need be, but follow it to the end!

CHAPTER SIX

AN hour later a panting man and a sweating bloodhound halted at the corner of one of the most abominable dens in the city. Merlin knew it well. It was the resort of forgers and thieves, gunmen and yeggs, women of the underworld, drunkards, drug fiends, gamblers, robbers, murderers and all the other specialized disciples of vice. He shuddered to think that the bloodhound had found this the end of the trail, for it was eloquent testimony that Astra was concealed within, at the mercy of beasts in human form.

Less than two hours had passed since Astra had been taken from him. Perhaps he was already too late; if the gang inside had done to former Commissioner Holmes what Merlin knew they planned to do, then Astra might indeed be in danger. His own life might be the next to go. Merlin had no illusions. Perfectly well he realized that the city was thenceforth too big for him and the gang; that they would consider his death—and most likely Astra's as well—an insurance policy against immediate trouble. There must be no more delays; he must get inside that place at once.

It was a shabby house in a shabby street; an old-timer, once respectable; an ex-saloon that still retained its swinging doors and bar and secretly retailed filthy brew to its customers. Back of the barroom lay a wilderness of death traps—little rooms for private purposes, where men gathered clandestinely to plot against the law and humankind the law was drawn to protect. Merlin knew the place only by reputation; he had never passed its doors, but he knew its character and, in a general way, its layout. He decided to take a desperate chance—the only means he saw to accomplish his purpose.

Without another moment's hesitation he strode up to the door, pushed back the swinging panel, and with the dog's muzzle removed strode in. The place was poorly lighted; a group of rough-looking men were talking over glasses of red fluid; a villainous man, with a curling mustache, was behind the counter, an interested listener. Dead silence fell as Merlin entered.

"I'm looking for Blindy's husband," he boldly announced. "I'm to be in on this thing."

No one spoke, but the men looked at him savagely. For a full two minutes they stared at him insolently; then the bartender said:

"I don't know what you're talking about, young feller!"

Merlin frowned and moved a step nearer.

"You tell Blindy's husband that Red Mack is here," he said sternly. "He'll understand. He'll want me there!"

The bartender again surveyed him in impudent silence. Then he turned on his heel and passed into a back room. He was gone a suspiciously short time; Merlin suspected exactly what was up, but he was determined to go through with his dangerius plan, and he waited patiently. The bartender said exactly what Merlin had expected he would say when he returned.

"If you're Red Mack," he grunted sullenly, "you can go back into the third room to your left. But you can't take that dawg in there."

Even in that tense moment Merlin smiled. He had noticed the envious looks some of the crowd at the bar had cast at Beauty. If one of them, or all of them, ever tried to steal that dog, he knew what would happen. Beauty was a born terror, ready to fight at any time. So he readily acquiesced in this stipulation, tied Beauty to the leg of a table, and without a glance behind him passed into the black hallway beyond.

The next instant something dark and fierce lunged at him in the blackness, and he fell beneath a crushing blow. Exactly what he had expected had occurred. He had been attacked and felled; he was a prisoner, but he was a prisoner with Astra, and that was exactly what Merlin desired.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A TERRIBLE scene confronted Merlin when he opened his eyes.

He was bound with a long coil of rope and sat upright in the corner of a smoky little room lit by an oil lamp. Through the dim illumination of the place he could discern the others present, but soon the mists in his aching head cleared, and he understood what was transpiring.

There was a table in the centre of the room, and in a chair drawn up to it sat a man, muffled in a black cloak, with a black mask hiding his features. On the table before him ticked a cheap watch.

Opposite him sat another man, a burly, gray-haired man, bound and lashed as effectively as was the watching Merlin. His red face was mottled with splotches of white and blue, and his eyes were filmed with fear. He was watching the masked man intently. Merlin knew him at once—he was Commissioner Holmes!

In another corner of the room sat Astra. She, too, was bound and her face was pitifully white

as she stared at the nervous little man in the black cloak and the mask. As Merlin took in this sinister scene the masked man reached forward and lifted the watch, peering at the dial, as if impatient at the slow progress of its hands.

"Good-evening to all of you!" said Merlin gravely.

With a jumpy start the masked man whirled furiously and shook his fist.

"No sound wanted from you!" he snarled, his voice muffled and filled with rage. "I want you to witness the justice you struggled to prevent; I don't want to kill you too soon!"

"Thanks!" said Merlin, still gravely polite. "I suppose you are going to kill all of us?"

"Every last one of you. Slow, lingering deaths, if you make that necessary!" cried the old man, thumping the table with his fist, and then snatching at the watch again. Plainly the hands moved too slowly for him; he seemed to believe they lied. He put down the watch with a smothered oath.

"But I must speak," continued Merlin, whose alert brain was working, devising a suddenly conceived scheme. "I cannot control my tongue at all times. You forget that I am a seer; that I go into trances; that I must speak then, under the spirit guidance that overcomes me!"

With an impatient howl the man in the black cloak half rose from his chair.

"Speak but another word and with my own hands I'll choke you!" he threatened. He stood there, waiting to see if he should carry out his threat. But Merlin had accomplished his purpose. He said no more. Meanwhile the old man looked again at his watch.

"The time has come," he said with a strange, sudden glee in his voice. "The hands are within five minutes of the appointed hour. I shall proceed."

He leaned forward, one lean hand clutching the side of the table, the other mysteriously concealed within his cloak. His eyes, shining like bits of fire through the slits of his mask, were burning, in their intense glare fastened on the eyes of the man prisoned in the chair opposite.

"So, Commissioner Holmes," he cried mockingly, "to-night you are a ruined man, discredited in the eyes of the people, hated and detested on every hand, loved by no living thing except that wretched, twisted, dwarfed little boy of yours, who shall never look again upon your face. You know now the bitterness of gall, the gall you made me drink. Now you shall taste the slow, lingering, everlasting bitterness of death. From a dead hand you shall quaff it, Holmes—from one you have long since forgotten. You do not even know me—the man who has wrecked your life and now will destroy it!"

The man in the black cloak was slowly working himself into a very frenzy of odious hatred. He leaned forward still more, his hand clutching the edge of the table so tightly that the blue veins swelled like snakes.

"Cast back your memory, Holmes," he cried tauntingly. "Think back on the time when you were a captain. Remember the stool-pigeon, the spy among the criminals of this city whom you employed? Who was he? A wretched beggar kind of man, wasn't he—with a blind wife. Remember them—how they walked, begging, his hand ever holding hers, as they trudged up and down the streets, holding a tin cup out for alms? Remember that, hey? Remember that the stool-pigeon you despised, the stool pigeon whose traitorous information brought you your swift rise in the department, was a man, and he loved his poor blind wife. Now think back ten years—ten years of hell, Holmes—ten years ago this very day it was—the day of the Homecoming Week Parade. You were a big man that day! You led the parade on a white charger. But I—I was only a beggar, a stool-pigeon, to tramp up and down the dusty streets with my poor blind woman and her tin cup. Hand in hand we stood there, Holmes, at the edge of the throng. So thick was the press we could not move back; it was impossible. You saw us, and you knew us. What did you do? You waved me aside, and when you saw we did not move, we could not move, you would not swerve your horse an inch; imperiously onward you swept; in a panic I tried to drag my wife back, but in her blind bewilderment she went the wrong way, and your horse's iron shod feet trampled out her blood. Ten years ago to-night—we are within three minutes of the very hour—she passed out, still holding her hand in mine. I cursed you that night, Holmes; I swore I'd get you."

The inspector almost groaned as the vengeance-craving man went on:

"You couldn't keep me out of a regular job on the force, and I got it. I made up my mind I'd break you, and I did. The crime wave did not break you, Holmes. I broke you. I was the crime wave. I, who knew every crook in the city; I, who went to them and pleaded my case; I, who for years and years plotted my campaign as a general plots his wars; I, who let all hell loose upon the city simply to bring you to disgrace. So artfully had I worked it, so cleverly had I used my inside influence in the department, that the police were always in the wrong place when the crimes were committed. That's how I got you. The crime wave ends to-night."

The hands of the cheap little watch were moving slowly, but they were moving forward. With settled and malignant satisfaction the old man regarded them.

"This whipper-snapper detective," he suddenly resumed, "tried to balk my plans at the last moment. How he picked me out, I confess I do not know. But he sent me a message to quit. He's going to quit this earth in a few moments, he and his precious sweetheart. But first they must see you die! Now hearken, Holmes!"

He stood erect, a terrible figure, in his black raiment and his mask.

"I could not bear to surrender her handclasp," he said, his voice breaking a trifle. "I buried her in a damp part of Potter's Field, where the bodies quickly harden into petrified stone. One night, a year later, I stole there and with hammer and chisel cut off her hand. It looked like beautiful ivory. I put it on the head of my cane, and ever since I have carried it with me; her hand in mine, in death as in life. I have it by me now, Holmes. It shall be her dead hand that slays you."

His concealed hand came out from beneath the cloak. It clutched the cane with an ivory hand. At the same moment he removed his mask, and to the horrified Holmes disclosed his identity. He was Inspector Bland!

"I shall place her hand at your throat," he cried, his voice shrill with a rage that was plainly insane. "I shall place my own hand at the back of your neck. Together we shall crush and twist it; together we shall choke you—choke you—to death!"

Stumbling and quivering, maundering and jabbering incoherently, wild-eyed, but possessed of a maniacal strength, he moved toward the powerless man bound to the chair. With gloating passion he pressed the petrified hand against the throat of his victim; his long, eager hand held it there, while the other reached back and seized cold flesh.

"You're going to die now," he said in a cold, merciless voice. "For ten years I have waited for this. I promised her dead spirit I would do this. My vow is kept!"

Out of the shadows suddenly sprang a flying form. It hurled itself against the old man and dragged him quickly back; it clapped a hand over his mouth and forced him noiselessly to the door. In an insane spasm the old man wriggled and writhed and twisted to no avail; the athletic figure upon him was invincible. Merlin had escaped his coil of ropes and was fighting for the lives of three.

For all his maniacal strength, the old man could not struggle long. A deadly glare of hatred came into his eyes, the hatred of a man utterly mad, as he lay there, panting, looking up helplessly at his captor. And as he gazed a racking pain seized him; he coughed and feebly moved and sank back strangely quiet. The struggle and the fierce passion of his revenge had been too much for his heart; still clutching the dead hand in his, the old man passed on to the eternity which concealed his wife, his crimes uncommitted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN their rather upset, but very homelike studio that evening, Merlin sat by the crackling logs, with Astra beside him. There were sandwiches and cocoa on a tray near at hand. But the cocoa was getting cold and the sandwiches were untasted, while Astra still plied him with questions. "It was all ridiculously simple," he said deprecatingly, "and can be told in a very few words. I had long been convinced, as you know, that the crime wave was really a plot. I asked myself why any one should plot a crime wave. You know my trances, Astra; they are not really trances. They are merely my way of going into the silences. I detach myself from my surroundings merely in order to think—to work out problems in crime. That is all there is to what you call my trances. And the suggestion came to me under those circumstances—the apparently preposterous suggestion—that some one might be trying to break the commissioner of police, to disgrace him and cause his dismissal.

"I made a quiet investigation, and though the thing seemed absurd and had all the markings of a madman's imagination, I found evidences that actually supported the theory. Then one day I happened to notice Bland coming down the street with his cane. There was something oddly familiar about his walk and the position of his hand. I cast my mind back, and I remembered that he had once been a stool-pigeon and that his wife had been accidentally killed by Holmes. That gave me a clue instantly.

"I had to work cautiously, of course, but the fact that, except to the very elect in the department, I am unknown as a detective was a great help. I tried to find opportunity to get hold of that cane, for my suspicions were already aroused concerning it. And one day I passed Bland on the street, awkwardly knocked it from his hand, and picked it up to return it to him. In that brief instant I saw the palm. Astra, it was full of lines, crosses, whorls, sears and markings that any palmist could instantly recognize. I knew at once that it was a petrified human hand; no artist could carve such a life-like resemblance of flesh markings.

"But I had only incurred Bland's suspicions. He was insanely acute of mind, and he probably knew that my awkwardness in knocking down the cane was assumed. Anyhow, I sent him an anonymous warning to lay off Holmes, against whom I now began to perceive he was bending all his energies to ruin. That was two days ago. Anticipating that he might try a backfire, I made arrangements with the higher-ups in the police department that if, under any cause, I should be arrested, I was to be placed in a certain cell which, for reasons of secretly interviewing prisoners, unknown to their associates, has a secret door. My foresight was well justified. Bland managed to plant a lot of loot in my rooms: he knew that I had men shadowing him by this time, and he meant to have me out of the way when he was killing Holmes.

"I therefore surprised him very much by escaping so readily. But he was a clever man. He surmised that I should have need for my car and had it followed from the garage, consequently we were trailed when we went out to the cemetery.

My purpose there was to dig up the grave of his wife, the location of which I had been at some pains to establish. That ghoulish expedition, a part of which you witnessed, was justified, however, for it proved my case. The hand of the body—the right hand—had been taken off, and the body was petrified into stone.

"One of the crooks most faithful to Bland was a dwarfish, hunchback sort of man. It was he who trailed us to the graveyard, and when you fired that shot poor Deering chased him, but fell down and he got away. It was he who must have attacked you. How did he do it."

Astra shuddered at the recollection.

"He must have been clinging to our own machine," she faltered. "He leaped up from behind, and before I knew what was happening he had thrust a handkerchief soaked with chloroform over my face. I was going off into nowhere when I saw him fighting Deering with a knife. After that I remembered nothing until I awoke and found myself there."

Merlin pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"He must have dragged you out from the other side and called a waiting cab. That must be the explanation," he mused. "And I wonder what lie they used to lure Holmes in his trap. I do not particularly like Holmes myself, but there must be good in a man who claims a love like that little crippled kid has for him. I am glad we were able to save him. He will get his job back now. You recall how we three escaped from the dive with my hound when Bland died. I had phoned headquarters ordering a raid, and the cops arrived in good season to get us out of there."

Silence fell between them for a moment, and then he reached out and took Astra's hand. I am tempted to go on and tell what followed, but a sense of delicacy prevents. A man's love-making, and particularly his proposal, is his own private affair. It is not my business to tell about it.

But I will say this:

They are the happiest married couple in my acquaintance, and I know a lot of them.

A WELL FULL OF FISH

THERE is a remarkable well in southwestern Minnesota concerning which a correspondent writes to us, says *Youth's Companion*. The well began to overflow not long after it was dug, for a strong spring burst out in the bottom of it, after the melting of the heavy winter snows. The well was surrounded by a tight, 4-foot curbing between the narrow cracks of which a stream of water trickled steadily away.

One morning in September the well was found to be full of tiny fish. Everyone in the family hastened to see the sight. The fish were crowded so thickly together that they were actually dying for lack of air. The curbing was too tight to permit them to float out, so a board was knocked off and a stream of fish began to swim out with the current.

So thick were the fish that it was impossible even to water the stock. Any attempt to haul up a pail of water only resulted in a pail of tiny fish. Apparently there was no diminution in numbers, although they floated away with the overflow for several weeks.

People from all around the country came to see this wonderful well. Pickerel, bass, perch and other kinds of fish were identified. No one ever discovered where they came from. No bass or pickerel are to be found in any stream nearer than twenty miles. After much study and discussion of the problem, the only conclusion that could possibly be accepted was that the fish must have been drawn into an underground current from some river, and carried along for miles until they found this opening.

The next fall more fish came in about the same time, although not in nearly so great numbers. After that the spring became stopped up, and the well was thereafter an ordinary one.

BE SURE TO READ IT!

THE publishers of "Moving Picture Stories" have been permitted by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation to fictionize one of their greatest and most celebrated photoplays entitled "The Affairs of Anatol." It is a great story, fictionized by one of our best writers, and will interest you more than any story you have ever read. Do not fail to get a copy of "Moving Picture Stories," No. 450, out today on all news-stands, and read this wonderful story.

Missing Ten Years

By KATHERINE STAGG

MAUD DAVIS stood on her porch and watched the Saturday trains rush by.

Maud was white (in every sense), unmarried, twenty-five and independent, but those Saturday trains did sometimes give her a pang of loneliness.

She had taken the bungalow with two other girls for a year, and had planned to make a home that would be happy, albeit an Adamless Eden. But it is odd how seldom these feminine combinations pan out. Ethel had married very unexpectedly, and Alice had found the country too quiet; hence the lonely lady.

Tall and slim as a sapling, dark hair and eyes that could swim with the glow of a generous and ardent nature or glitter with just a touch of hardness if need be, for she had been in the business world for nearly seven years and had learned to watch her step when necessary.

An unlooked-for legacy of comfortable proportions had come her way, and the secretarial job had been left behind, but, if the truth were known, Maud sometimes almost longed for the stir and hum of business.

Well, she was not timid at any rate, and preferred to be without the help of a maid after numerous experiments with the tag ends of humanity who were the only ones who would even listen to the siren call of big wages, if said wages were to be earned in the wilds of Northern New Jersey, a couple of miles from a movie or a post-office.

Maud sighed involuntarily as she turned back into the house.

Week days were not so bad, but Saturday to Monday always stretched into a very long time in anticipation. Perhaps it was a kind of hypnosis that she felt from all the crowds of returning males that she saw gaily watching from car windows as the trains flew on, knowing that other crowds were awaiting them with loving arms usually. She liked to smile a bit cynically to herself at this stage in her meditations, for well she knew the many ups and downs of her own kind. You will see by this that Maud was not an engénue, but a well-trained observer, and her two years in France had helped to swell her knowledge and experience of humans, if it did not increase her confidence in them. But these were only needs, and her heart was really an untouched and still vital organ, only waiting for the right eye-to-eye recognition that would melt away all her veneer of unconcern.

"Nothing to do until Monday but read, listen to the birds, and watch the flowers grow and give 'em a drink if it don't rain. Oh, it could be worse." Yet she sighed again.

Just then a merry honk of a motor horn sounded at her back gate, and she jumped as if it had been prematurely old Gabriel's well-known summons to look up the records.

Eagerly she ran through the house; it would be some one to talk to, anyhow, even if it were only some stranger asking directions.

At sight of her—and a pretty sight she was in her cool gown of pink organdie—a joyous whoop resounded toward the Jersey hills as Detective Johnny Lewis jumped from the flivver and grasped both of her hands in a greeting that matched the view halloo.

"Maud Davis, you altogether lovely female! Heard you were basking out here and dropped in to say 'howdy'; my, my, but you do look scrumptious; country air and all that, eh?"

"Johnny Lewis! Well, of all people. What brought you here? Pretty far out of your bailiwick, aren't you?"

It was a very cordial smile that met Johnny's, and the handshake was returned with real heartiness.

"Dear girl, all the wide, wide world is my bailiwick when the spirit moves me, and the spirit is moving me like sixty just at present. A new mystery, and it's a corker!"

"Out here?" incredulously.

"About fifteen miles from here, I should say."

"Murder or robbery?"

"Don't know yet; maybe both, but it's a girl, anyhow."

"Oh, is that all? The place is full of them, attached and unattached, but very attachable, I should guess, all o' them."

"Nixie flirtation; didn't have to hire a fliv and drive through oceans of bad roads for flirts; they come easier."

"You are mixing your figures of speech; who ever heard of oceans of roads? But tell me about the job; I love mysteries."

"Well, you might ask a fellow to come in and have a glass of milk or whatever your cow gives, and maybe I might drop a hint or two that will make you open those lovely orbs. Is that the right highbrow word? And it might be that your humble servant will need a trifle of co-operation, see?"

"Sounds lovely; I don't aspire to keep a cow; they are very troublesome females I have heard, but if ginger ale with a stick in it will do, just make yourself comfy in this chair, and I will have it in a jiff."

"Does that kind of stick rhyme with kick in the new and occult meaning of the word since Mr. Volstead was added to America's collection of celebrities?"

"Johnny, if I did not know you so well, I should never dare, in my lone condition, to confess that I own a cellar, another occult word since a certain never-to-be-forgotten date."

They were two miles from a neighbor, so cigarettes were added to the set-out, and it looked like a pleasant meeting.

Johnny drew a breath of comfort and relaxation, for he had long known the value of using the odd moments for rest; nerves that might have broken in the strenuous life of a young and very successful sleuth were kept in normal condition only by the elasticity of his temperament and these stolen periods of letting go, as it were. Under thirty, and looking so boyish that it had really been an asset, Johnny yet held an enviable position in the regard of his chiefs, one of the best-known private detective firms in the city.

"Is it mixed right, my lord?"

"Bully." A large, comprehensive smile spread over Johnny's expressive features. It was evident that they knew each other well and liked each other in that clean, wholesome way of our Young America—a thing to be proud of and the safest kind of safeguard always.

"Let me see, it is five years ago that you reigned in our office as confidential stenog, isn't it?"

"About that," Maud replied, waiting anxiously for she knew with that opening there would be interesting things to follow.

"Feel any interest in the game yet?"

"Sure thing."

"Well, then, I've a queer thing to tell you. Ready?"

"Shoot!" Maud's eyes were roguish as she lapsed into the vernacular.

"You know what gets me is the eternal lack of curiosity in most people."

"Nonsense; everybody is aching with curiosity; what a fool idea; I reckon I know something about that. Here, in the country, why I've seen people almost start a fight just to find out what kind of swear words the deacons use when they get mad. And I really have seen them drive slow to count the pieces of wash on the line."

"Oh, I don't mean that kind of little, measly thing; I mean interest in some sort of thing that is really curious. On the way here, I saw a wagon loaded with garden truck and in big letters on it 'God's Farm,' and not a soul took a second look at it."

"Oh, they are used to that; it is a place not far from here, where the remnant of some queer religious sect vegetate and—that is about all I know about them."

"See? That is just what I mean; why don't you know about them? This time three months from now I'll know about them, you can bet; maybe I'll stay there a while, but that is not my lay just now; it's something queerer than that."

"Honest? I'm dying to hear it; let me fix another drink and then I'll listen all over."

"Did you ever hear of that strange lot of people up in the Ramapo Mountains, just north of here, known as the Jackson Whites?"

"Why, yes, I've heard rumors, but no one ever goes near them; they are awfully ignorant and sort of wild; worse than gypsies."

"You bet they are. And the funniest mixture of races I ever struck." Johnny leaned back and watched for the dramatic effect.

It did not disappoint him; Maud jumped in her chair as she exclaimed:

"You don't mean to say you've been there?"

"That is just what I do mean. I read an article about them in a Sunday paper a short time ago, and I thought it was a fine yarn and wondered who was the marvel boy who put it across, for how could such a lot of wild creatures exist so near what we call our most highly civilized city. But, kid"—he paused impressively—"it's all true, and then some."

"Lordy! Is it? When did you go?" breathlessly.

"You know, I've got naturally a large bump of curiosity, as aforesaid, and it has been cultivated to such an extent by the results it has brought in in the once-in-a-while lucrative profession of a detective, that now that bump has gotten so large I have to get my hats made to order with a sort of bay window built in."

"Oh, Johnny, you are joshing me; I might have known."

"Not on your best silver screen film; this is darned solemn facts, even if I sound a bit flooey. Lay that to the jubilating contents of the sample of your 'cellar'; it likes me well, and I return the liking. Oh, ye emancipated woman, so full of pep and independence, would you grant a mere male a very great favor?"

"If you will talk sense and not sound like two o'clock in the morning in Greenwich Village."

"O. K. I'm rested now; my brain fag has eased up some, and I will now get to my muttons; honest, it looks like it might be Mary's little lamb."

"There you go again; do be sensible."

"I am; never more so. Day before yesterday, at ten o'clock in the morning, I left the little bus at a last outpost of the Erie railroad, and hiked onward, trusting to my hunch only, and spent the entire day rambling up and up and into the wild, wild region of Hoog de Kopf that is taboo to all the surrounding country.

"Go on; 'day before yesterday.'"

"Yep; I even slept in the woods for two nights, with not even pajamas, for I had seen some of the queer natives and I had also seen one that I am convinced is not one of the hill natives."

"Oh! oh! So that is it!"

"You know, they are really a mixture of whites, negroes, a dash of Indian, and to cap the climax for human mixtures it seems a bunch of Albinos got up there somehow and interbred, although I always thought that they were, if you will excuse the biological fact, incapable of breeding. When I got really up in their radius,

naturally I went very cautiously, hiding in the undergrowth every time I saw any kind of a figure, but most of the men were off fishing I heard afterward and the women were having a blackberry hunt, so the place was comparatively empty. I rambled around quite a lot until I saw two girls sitting on a log, occupied in the well-known rite of drying their hair. Well, here came my first big sensation. One of them was a pink-eye with negro features and a dusky, ashy sort of skin that looked the weirdest thing against the actual whiteness of her hair, and only about sixteen, I guess. I was so busy taking in this queer picture that I scarcely saw the other, but when I did—whoopee! If ever I saw class—little Miss Aristocrat in rags and gunny-sacks. No pipe dream, I'll tell the world. She was older than the other one, about your age, Maud, and a beauty!"

"Good heavens, Johnny! Did you speak to them?"

"Not then; listening was my business about that time, but they had very little to say to each other. Not knowing I was going to find a slice of the dark continent, I hadn't brought any glass beads, chewing gum or calico, and I might have waited for a month to start something without frightening them. But, luckily for me, they had a dog. I managed him with a piece of meat from the last sandwich that I had put in my pocket; my infantile idea of equipment for an exploring trip. Well, anyway, I can nearly always get along with a dog of any kind, and this one did me the trick, for he slipped and fell over a rocky place where he was hunting some quarry known only to himself, and the poor beast broke his leg. That gave me my chance; I picked him up and rendered first aid with a couple of sticks and my only handkerchief. The girls were both terribly shy, but I finally got them to talk a bit."

"Yes?" Maud scarcely breathed she was so interested.

"The long and the short of it is that Dorothy Arnold is not the only lost girl, you know. It took me these two days to get even a little bit of their confidence, but, skipping details, I am going to kidnap or elope with those two girls to-night!"

"Johnny Lewis! Do you dare?"

"You watch me, and this is where you come in. I've got to take 'em both, for it seems that pink-eye has been a sort of companion to the other one. They call her Dell, by the way, but she don't know if it is her name or not. She has been with them for a long time, but it is God's truth. They don't even keep count of time, and only hazily know the seasons, and that people 'outside,' as they call 'em, have a day they call Sunday, when they don't keep stores open. For once in a great while they take skins and fish to village and trade them for salt and tobacco. How this girl got there and all that is plumb a mystery. I take it that it is a case of amnesia; she must have had some kind of shock, some accident likely, and wandered up there, and she can't remember a thing of who she was or where she came from. Now what do you think of that?"

"You make my blood run cold. Are you sure she isn't one of them? Maybe you are just fancying that she is different."

"No, it took some eloquence, you bet, but I did get them to believe I meant no harm. And at last she produced an old wallet that she said she had in a little bag when she was found in the woods. Oh, I forgot to say she had some kind of fever, I should judge, and these creatures at least gave her shelter, and when she got better and couldn't remember anything, why she just stayed on. Probably just a growing girl when it happened and didn't know what else to do in her feeble condition."

"And what was in the wallet? Somebody's picture?"

"No, not that, but look!" Johnny flourished a large square of engraved paper, knowing he had led up to this point with the skill of the born raconteur.

"Steel stock, as I live!"

"Steel stock, and quite a sizable wad of it; so it's your Uncle Dudley's job to trace it and her past history with this by no means small clue."

"Good gracious, that is the queerest story I ever heard."

"And there's more to it; did I say that the Dell young woman still speaks with a marked English accent? A little lost countess maybe. Say, Maud, she is a beauty, I tell you, with big black eyes and a perfect glory of cloudy black hair!"

"Don't get lyrical, Johnny; it isn't in your line; I half believe you are just telling me a yarn."

"No, Maud, it's gospel truth. And what's more, I rather think I've gotten here in the nick of time, for the girl is getting to be pestered by the males of this bloomin' lot of jackies, I strongly suspect. And you know, from cannibal to king, a male brute will fall for a good-looker. Pink-eye is a sickly little thing, so I don't believe they will care much if she is missing, but the other—well, we got to do it somehow."

"But just what do you propose to do?"

"Of course, I could put the whole story up to the hick authorities and get action of some kind, but that would mean a lot of notoriety, and the countess might not enjoy that if she ever gets her memory back. So this is my plan. They've seen automobiles from a distance, but, naturally, have never been in one, so I am going to meet them to-night at the nearest place I can coax the flivver up into their rugged and ragged hills, and with the promise of giving them a ride I am going to bring them here, both of them. You see, I am careful of the proprieties even in this crisis."

"Here, Johnny?" demanded Maud.

"Yes, here; they are too much in the rough to venture any farther in their present clothes and

in their really pitiful state of ignorance and timidity."

"But won't these people try to follow them?"

"I think not; they are scary of the settlements, except when they rob henroosts, and want nothing to do with outsiders. Then I want you to fix them both up with some of your things, and I will spin right back and plant their old rags on the edge of a very dark and very unpleasant-looking old pond near their cabins."

"I see; the Jackson Whites will think they have been drowned; then what?"

"You need a well dug, don't you, or something done to your garden? I can have several picked men put to work here for some such purpose apparently who will protect you. Then me for the city to hunt up the owners of this small packet, which is the pivot on which Lady Fortune must turn in this case."

"And I thought the country was dull!" Maud whispered.

"The question is, are you game to do it?"

"Can you ask it? My heart aches for that poor girl."

"It will only be for a few days, Maud; you ease them up a bit on the ways of civilization, so we don't scare them to death; then I'll get some big specialist up here and let him decide if it is a case for a sanitarium or not. See?"

"I'll do all in my power, and here's my hand on it."

Maud was near tears, and Johnny had a moistness of the eyes that was a credit to him.

I wish space permitted to tell of that long wild ride and how Johnny bore himself through one of the hardest ordeals of his young life. It was no joke to invade the hills that held a couple of thousand of these strange people and carry away two girls from their very midst. He felt that a dusky face might be lurking behind every tree, and when a loon called to its mate he honestly jumped, then grinned in the darkness and muttered to himself:

"One dream of my boyhood come true; the wild, wild West has got nothing on this old night in the Ramapo hills."

Somehow he got them to Maud's bungalow in safety, and Maud almost thought she was back in France once more, caring for the most tragic refugees that she had ever seen.

Two weeks later Johnny arrived one fine morning in his trusty flivver, and unrolled a parcel of news that sounded like a fairy tale.

You will remember when the Carteret House, a large summer hotel, burned like a huge bonfire in 1911? The fire engines refused to work, and there was an appalling loss of life, a fact that was hushed up as quickly as possible, for such things are very bad for business. The register was lost in the fire, so the list of guests had never been known. But among them had been Lord Wilton Frost Willoughby and his daughter, the Hon. Adele Willoughby, who turned out to be the little lost girl of the Ramapos. It had been supposed that she was burned, too, and her relatives, only distant cousins, were astounded when the news came that she was alive and well, owing to the gentle efforts of Miss Maud Davis, under the expert direction of the specialist provided by Johnny.

These relatives as time went by often wondered why the Hon. Adele kept such a strange creature for a maid, but poor little Pink-eye will never be separated from her mistress.

Johnny was handsomely rewarded of course, and he and his wife and Maud have a standing invitation to visit at the beautiful home of the Hon. Adele in England. But of course they'll never go, as they are too much taken up with their own affairs in the land of the free.

ENTIRE TOWN TO BE REMOVED TWO MILES

REMOVAL of the entire town of American Falls, Idaho, with its population of 2,000, two or three miles to a new site higher than its present location, is to be attempted within a few months by engineers working on a huge irrigation project.

Waters of the Snake River, on which American Falls is located, are to be dammed, according to present plans, and will be used to reclaim some 300,000 or more acres of arid land now given over to the sage brush.

Engineers say the project is one of the largest ever attempted. The big dam itself will have an abutment of one mile in length, will be 60 feet high and will have a base sufficiently strong to stand an additional 30 feet should it ever be deemed necessary to add to its height.

The big reservoir, to be filled by the waters backing up from the dam, will cover some 76 square miles and will have an impound of 3,000,000 square feet. Its waters will extend from American Falls to Blackfoot, a distance of about 20 miles. The reservoir will have a shore line of nearly 100 miles and at its widest point it will be four miles across and in places 90 feet deep.

Besides moving the town of American Falls, it will be necessary to tear up the Oregon Short Line Railroad and move it to higher bench land. A railroad bridge will be razed and a new one constructed farther up the Snake River. The Idaho Power Company's plant furnishing light and power to the southeastern section of the State will be removed.

The dam site has been surveyed and preliminary work in the form of drilling for a solid rock foundation has been started.

"Vengeance Is Mine"

By OLIVER BUCK

I HAD been chasing a famous burglar from New York to Cincinnati, and from the last-named city down the Ohio to Cairo.

When I arrived at the mouth of the Ohio river, I lost trace of my man, and I was in doubt whether to proceed up or down the Mississippi after him.

As the crook was accused of a brutal murder as well as a robbery, he would be very likely to descend the river, and then cut across into Texas, where there was a rendezvous for desperate fugitives from all parts of the country.

Jack Thomas was the fellow's name, and he was originally from Cincinnati, where he was very respectfully connected, as he was the only black sheep in a fine family flock. He was aware that I was on his track, as he had a very narrow escape from me in his native city.

I was about to start down the river in quest of him, when a chance meeting caused me to change my mind.

At the hotel in Cairo I met an old friend who had served with me in the World War, and whose name was Paul Sidney.

Paul was engaged in the lumber trade, and he was just returning from a successful trip down the river.

He was a splendid specimen of the Western raftsman, as he was tall and muscular, fearless and free-hearted; and he was as simple in his dress and manner as if he did not have a dollar in the world. Yet Paul Sidney had a good bank account in St. Louis; he had a fine farm on what was called the American Bottom; and he had large interests in the lumber trade.

We dined together at the hotel in Cairo; and in the course of conversation I told him of my mission in that part of the country. Paul became very much interested in the fugitive, and said:

"Give me a description of him."

Drawing a photograph from my pocket, I presented it to him, saying:

"That's his picture. It was taken in Cincinnati three years ago."

Paul looked at the portrait for a moment, and then burst out:

"Why, I know the fellow, and he is a regular sire! He is married to the daughter of a neighbor of mine. I'll bet a hundred I know where he is camping now."

"Where is that?"

"Just let me tell what I know about the fellow first, and then I'll put you on his trail, and help you to hunt him down as well."

"You'll be doing a great favor to the community at large if you do."

"I know it. Now listen to what I have to tell you. That crook has not made tracks for Texas, nohow."

"Why do you think so?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you. I know the fellow as Phil Jarvis, and I know him to be connected with one of the worst gangs on this big river of ours. About five years ago my neighbor, Bolton, met him in St. Louis, and he was quite taken with the fellow, as he seemed to have plenty of money and he was rigged up in great style, besides being a good-looking man of twenty-eight or so, with a tongue just fit to impose on the innocent. Old Bolton, who had a splendid place near mine, invited Jarvis to spend some weeks at his house. The old man had two young sons at school and a pretty daughter of eighteen keeping house for him. The fellow made love to the daughter, and they were soon married on the sly in St. Louis.

"Very soon after she told her father about the marriage, and the old man took it quite natural, invited Phil Jarvis to make the house his home, and treated him just as he wou'd his son.

"When the two boys came home from school, however, they couldn't agree with Phil Jarvis at all. Then the old man and the young wife took sides against the boys, and they were driven from the house.

"The boys came over to my place to stop for a time, and Phil started away for St. Louis, saying he'd be back in a few days.

"The two Bolton boys met him at the village hotel on the afternoon they left their father's house, and they had a fight.

"As the youngsters were only fifteen and sixteen, they got badly whipped, for Phil Jarvis was —and is still, I presume—a very tough customer to handle.

"On the morning after the fight, old Mat Bolton was found murdered in his bed, the drawers and closets in the room were all ransacked, and his money, watch, and other valuables were shipped off.

"Then Betsy Jarvis swore that she saw her two brothers sneaking about the woods near the house on the previous evening, and the boys were at once arrested.

"On searching around my house, their father's watch was found in the barn, but none of the money was found with them.

"The boys protested their innocence, and I fully believed them, as I was certain that they did not leave my house on the night of the murder.

"They admitted that they were in the woods in the evening, watching to see their father alone, and ask him for some money to go down to New

Orleans or away to California in search of their fortune.

"My young son of fourteen, who slept in a large back room with them, swore that they all kept awake talking until long after midnight.

"The boys were great favorites in the neighborhood, and few believed them guilty.

"They were tried and acquitted.

"Being high-spirited youngsters, they left the neighborhood soon after, asserting that they would never take one dollar from their father's property until they had found and punished the real murderer."

"Who is the wretch whom you knew as Phil Jarvis," I remarked, "and whom I am after now as Jack Thomas?"

"That is my belief, old friend. Now, listen to what I have yet to say.

"When the boys left our neighborhood, Phil Jarvis settled in their house with his wife. It was soon noticed that several robberies occurred in the neighborhood.

"I had a fine bloodhound I got down in Memphis that I thought the world of. One night, when we were all away from home at a house-raising, my place was robbed, and the bloodhound was missing. I tracked him over to the Bolton farm, where we found him dead in the wood I spoke about.

"As I was suspicious of Phil Jarvis, I summoned some of the neighbors, and we called on him, for the purpose of arresting him and searching the house.

"It was near midnight when we got there, and every one appeared to be asleep. However, I knocked at the front door, and Mrs. Jarvis soon put her head out of a window and asked what we wanted.

"I answered that we wished to see her husband about the robbery at my house.

"'Do you dare to accuse him?' she asked, firing up like a fury.

"'We do!' I bluntly answered.

"The words were scarcely out of my mouth when they opened fire on us from inside, and three of our party fell badly wounded.

"The rest of us retreated to the wood in quick order, as we were not prepared for such hot work, and we held a consultation.

"Some of us set watch on the house, while the others started off for the sheriff, more men, and rifles as well.

"From the shots, as well as from the yells and threats, we judged there was a large party in the house.

"When a good force was collected, I led them to the attack; but we didn't find a single soul in the house. They must have all made off to the river by some secret path."

"But did you not see anything of the young woman again?"

"She was seen in St. Louis three nights after, disguised as a young man. We have reason to believe that she joined the gang of river pirates of which her husband is one of the leaders."

"What has become of the house and farm?"

"Mrs. Jarvis sent an old man and his wife down from St. Louis to take care of the place. They live in the house sometimes for a month or two, and then go away for three months. The neighbors say that the house is haunted ever since old Bolton was murdered."

"But how do you account for the fellow, Phil Jarvis, or Bill Thomas, going away so far as New York?"

"We did hear that he shot a gambler in a row down at Natchez two years ago. That man's two brothers, who are desperate characters, have sworn to have his life. That is one reason why I don't think he has gone down the river."

"Where do you suppose he is hiding now?"

"I'll risk a hundred he is up in the old place next to my farm. I am as much down on the guy as you are. If you will come up with me we'll run him down as sure as fate."

After some further interesting conversation with Paul Sidney, I made up my mind to pay a visit to the old haunted house in the American Bottom.

I was particularly anxious to interview the old man and woman in charge of the place.

Thanks to the flood in the river, we were enabled to land at a spot only a few miles from my friend's farmhouse.

Before leaving Cairo I disguised myself in the rig of a raftsman, and I traveled with Paul as one of his gang.

On the night of my arrival at Paul's farm, I learned that the old man and his wife had arrived at the Bolton homestead on the previous evening, and that they had secured provisions at the village as if they meant to make a long stay.

Then I set out to interview them.

Leaving the house at dusk, Paul and I started on horseback for a settlement some five miles further on from the river. Then we made a detour, and struck a wood not far from the Bolton homestead. Dismounting in the wood, I left my horse with Paul and started to the place alone. As I approached the haunted house I saw a light in the kitchen, and then I went on boldly and knocked at the front door. Very soon after a female voice hailed me from a lower window, crying:

"Who's there?"

"Does Mr. Sidney live here?" I asked.

"No. He lives over two miles further on the road."

"Two miles further on? Thunderation, and I am dead played out now."

"Who are you?" asked a man's voice.

"I'm a raftsman that worked for Paul Sidney. I came from St. Louis on foot to see him on business. If you'll give me a shake-down till morning, good people, I'll be ever so much obliged, as I'm dead used up."

The man and the woman consulted in whispers at the window for a few moments, and then the latter opened the door, saying:

"We're only in charge here, but we can give you supper and a bed for the night. Come right into the kitchen."

I was soon in the kitchen, and making my observations, while the old woman busied herself to get me some supper.

The old man did not appear in the room, but I felt that he was making his observations also from an inner apartment, as I had that peculiar feeling over me that one experiences when a pair of keen and unseen eyes are on you.

The old woman was not very talkative, as she contented herself with asking me how long I had been rafting for Paul Sidney and how I liked him as an employer.

As I had fished up sufficient information, I was enabled to answer her in a very satisfactory manner.

So I supposed at the time, but I was very much mistaken.

While the old woman was waiting on me at supper I noticed that her hands were soft and white, but when she removed the cloth they were disfigured with wood ashes.

It did not take me long to learn that I was dealing with a young woman in disguise, and I soon after made up my mind that I had the old murdered man's daughter before me.

But who was the old fellow?

Was I alone in that lonesome house with a desperate murderer and his equally criminal and desperate wife?

Well, I had taken my chances, and I must see the matter out. When supper was over the old woman took up a lamp, and remarked:

"My old man is tired, and has gone to bed. I will show you to your sleeping-room, stranger. This way."

She led me up to the top of the three-story building, and then to a room at the back, as she said:

"I hope you'll have a good sleep. As you are a stranger to us, you'll not think it mean if I bolt the door here on the outside."

Before I could reply, the bedroom door was closed on me, and the bolt outside secured by the woman. I held the lamp in my hand, and I at once looked at the window, as well as around the room. My worst fears were then realized, as I was a prisoner. Sitting down on an old bed that had not been used for years evidently, I commenced to ponder over my situation. While thus engaged, a sickly feeling stole over me, and I sprang up, crying:

"Good heavens! am I poisoned?"

"That's just your fix, Buck," cried a savage voice outside the door. "You took poison in that coffee, and you'll be a dead man before morning. You thought you were smart coming here, but you're not smart enough for Jack Thomas."

"Or his wife either," cried the woman. "I saw you at Cairo with Paul Sidney, and I knew you would come spying about here."

I did not answer the pair, but I ran to the window and fired my pistol, as a signal to my friend.

Then I made an effort to vomit the poisoned coffee, and succeeded.

Fortunately, I had a small flask of brandy in my pocket, and I took a drink.

Then I put my head to the barred window and inhaled the night air, firing the revolver once again at the same time.

Shouts and the galloping of horses were soon heard along the road, and I knew that my friend and his friends were hastening to my rescue.

But would the murderers take the alarm in the meantime and escape?

Dashing to the door, I flung my whole weight against it, and, to my joy, the bolt outside gave way.

With the lamp in one hand, and the revolver in the other, I rushed fearlessly down the stairs, just as my friends burst in at the front door.

I caught a glimpse of a woman's form dashing out the back way, and I made after her, crying:

"There they go! 'Tis Phil Jarvis and his wife, old friend!"

The man was ahead of the woman in the back yard, and he held a heavy club in his left hand and a pistol in the other.

Wheeling around, he fired at us, and I returned the fire at once.

The crook uttered a cry of pain, let fall his pistol, and dashed off toward a wood.

The woman stumbled and fell, and she was soon secured.

I ran after the murderer as fast as I could, but two active forms soon darted on ahead of me, and one of them also carried a heavy stick in his right hand.

"They're the Bolton boys!" cried Paul Sidney, as he dashed on with me.

"They tracked the rascal from St. Louis, and they're just in time to avenge their father. Thunder! but Sam is on him now!"

The elder lad was on the murderer with a vengeance, as he had caught up with him just on the verge of the wood.

His brother was close behind him.

"Leave him to me, Ben!" cried the elder brother as he raised his club.

Jack Thomas held up the wounded arm to ward off the blow, but the stick in the hands of Sam Bolton fell on the murderer's neck, and he was crushed to the earth.

There was a case for Judge Lynch in that wood near by that night.

Before Jack Thomas was strung up, he confessed to the murder of old Bolton.

The wicked wife took poison on the same night and died.

The Roebuck Riddle

BY HERBERT WARREN HALL

"WELL," said District Attorney Moore, inserting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest and eyeing his visitor with a self-satisfied gleam in his eye, "in my opinion young Marshall Roebuck is guilty of the murder of his uncle, John Roebuck, and if he doesn't do a life term for it, it won't be my fault."

"But, Sam," replied the Reverend Sullivan Sharpe, "the evidence is all circumstantial. And, my boy, I want to tell you something, not to hurt your feelings, but in the way of friendly warning. Some people are saying that now that you have recently been elected district attorney, you want to get as many convictions as possible to your credit. They imply that you are over-zealous. You and I have been friends since you were a little boy and rode on my knee, and I want to warn you to be careful, boy, when a man's life hangs in the balance."

"Have you been to see Roebuck?"

"Yes, I have. And that's why I came up here to see you. I saw him in his cell to-day, and he declares his innocence, and there is a ring of truth about his statements that I cannot doubt. I can hardly explain it, but something seems to urge me to take up the battle in his behalf, and I'm going to do it. I'm going to change my role from that of minister of the gospel to that of detective—or, what's better, I am going to combine the two in myself. I feel there is something guiding me."

The district attorney smiled and offered his hand to Sharpe. "Put it there, Mr. Sharpe," he said; "you know me. I think he is guilty, but if he is innocent, then I certainly want to see him freed. I want to conduct my office honorably, and I'm going to give you every opportunity to prove Marshall Roebuck's innocence. You have been too good a friend to me and my family in days gone by for us to quarrel now."

"Fine, Sam! Thanks. Now, I wish you would go over the case with me. Tell me all about it. I want to get all the facts possible before I start in. Of course, I have read the newspapers, and have even been to the spot where old Roebuck fell, but I want a full narrative of the case as you know it so far."

The district attorney drew some papers from a desk and began:

"Old John Roebuck and his nephew Marshall have for several years lived together in the old homestead, an old family servant named Mary Thompson doing their housekeeping. Old John was a widower, and both of Marshall's parents died when he was a baby, so the three lived alone in the big old house. Old John was very well-fixed financially, and did not have to work, but passed his time mostly in his library (he was a fiend for books), and every afternoon he would start out at exactly three o'clock and walk until half-past four for exercise, returning at precisely the same time each day. In his library, which was on the second floor, were Spanish-American war relics, including a good rifle, which hung near a window. People said that old John was rich, but rather tight-fisted.

"Young Marshall Roebuck was of a different disposition than his Uncle John. He had the reputation of being rather dissipated, although very popular among a certain set. It is important to remember that he had a very hot temper. It was generally known among the neighbors that uncle and nephew quarreled considerably. For one thing, Marshall was infatuated with a certain Miss Fairchance, much against the wishes of his uncle. I can find nothing against her except that she is young and frivolous, but not bad—merely shallow. She is a café dancer. Of course old Roebuck was prejudiced against her, as he was a rather narrow-minded, old-fashioned, puritanical sort of man—intolerant of modern day amusements such as the movies, dances, Sunday baseball and the like. And yet he was in his way very fond of Marshall, his brother's only son, whom he had reared from boyhood, and Marshall was named in the old man's will as the legatee of a large sum. And there you have another link in the chain against the nephew."

Sullivan Sharpe was sitting with his feet cocked comfortably upon the desk, his finger tips pressed together, thoughtfully absorbing the words of Moore.

"Yes, Sam, but did he know that he was so named in the will?"

"He did. I'm coming to that presently. On Thursday, October fourteenth, the housekeeper, Miss Mary Thompson, was doing some housework in the room adjoining the old man's study. Marshall and his uncle were in the study, and Miss Thompson overheard them quarreling over Marshall's love affair. Miss Thompson was an old servant of the family, and they paid little attention to her, so she had an opportunity to hear all of it. The old man showed Marshall a copy of his will, naming Marshall as heir, but informed Marshall that it was his intention to alter the will cutting the nephew off penniless just as soon as Knox, the old man's lawyer, returned from his vacation.

"The next afternoon the uncle took his regular

afternoon walk, returned to his front gate, and started to approach up the sloping gravel path toward the house. As he was about halfway to the house two or three shots rang out, and John Marshall dropped dead, killed by a rifle bullet which I think was fired from his library window on the second floor of the house. No one saw him killed, and it was some time before his body was seen there. Of course excitement was great and the police were called and immediately conducted an examination. An hour previous to that time Marshall Roebuck had been seen cleaning a rifle—the same one which had hung in the old man's library. This was particularly damning evidence, although Marshall asserts that he was merely doing it in preparation for the hunting season. The gun bore no evidence of having been recently fired, but no doubt young Roebuck covered that up. He was exceedingly nervous when notified to come down and view the remains of his uncle, and pretended to be overcome with grief. The bullet was found in the body. It was of a large calibre and entered the abdomen at right angles to the body. However, it is a peculiar fact that it did not penetrate very far into the flesh. A large calibre, high-power cartridge fired from so short a range usually travels with tremendous velocity. The bullet was of the same sort used in the gun Marshall had been cleaning."

"How many shots did you say were fired?" asked Sharpe.

"The witnesses conflict as to that. At least two, and probably three, but we cannot state exactly. Even Marshall himself had the nerve to say that he heard three shots! What do you think about that?"

"I do not know what to think yet, Sam."

"And then, when the police grilled old Miss Thompson and brought out the fact that uncle and nephew had quarreled only the day before about the will, the police took him into custody, and the coroner's jury rendered a verdict against him. Of course young Roebuck denies his guilt, but the evidence is overwhelmingly against him."

The Reverend Sullivan Sharpe slowly removed his long legs from the desk and rose from his chair, reaching for his hat. The district attorney secretly admired the tall, slender, dignified figure of Sharpe, pleasingly but quietly dressed in black. It was plain that Sharpe was thinking deeply.

"Yes," said Sharpe, "the circumstantial evidence looks bad for Marshall. But, Sam, something tells me he is innocent. I think I'll start in by going to the spot where old Roebuck fell dead. Not that I doubt the acumen of your force, boy, but—well, I just want to see for myself what I can find. I hope you don't think I am butting in?"

"No, no. You can go as far as you like. I know your motives are of the best. I wish you good luck, Mr. Detective. Good day."

It was about four in the afternoon as Sharpe departed from the district attorney's office, and it would not be dark until after six, so he made his way rapidly to the scene of the murder. No time was to be lost, as eight days had already elapsed since the death of Roebuck.

Finally he arrived at the gravel path which led from the street up to Roebuck's house. He began to walk slowly up the path, over the same ground covered by John Roebuck on his last fatal trip. Sharpe tried to imagine what had happened on that day when Roebuck had been shot. There, ahead of him, was the big house, one of the large brick structures so fashionable a generation ago, and still presenting a very imposing appearance, for old John Roebuck had cared for it well. In the second story, opening out over the front lawn, were four tall windows, and it was from the window on the extreme right that the shot was supposed to have been fired. Sharpe stood on the spot where John Roebuck had fallen and gazed at this window, trying to imagine that a person was standing within the room just behind the window, aiming a rifle at him. It could certainly be done, and even a mediocre marksman would have had no difficulty in bringing down his victim. The bullet would necessarily travel at a sharp downward slant, and, if the victim were standing erect, the bullet would enter the body at an angle of about 100 degrees. But, Sharpe recalled, John Roebuck was rather stooped forward, and a bullet fired from that window could not possibly have entered Roebuck's body at right angles, unless Roebuck had been leaning far backwards. Furthermore, reflected Sharpe, it was strange that the bullet had not penetrated very far into the flesh, which indicated that it had spent most of its force. These two facts seemed to have but one solution—the bullet must have been deflected from its original course, and in the first place had not been fired in the direction of Roebuck. This deduction seemed plausible enough, but Sullivan Sharpe found out later that it was erroneous, as will be seen shortly.

Sharpe hardly knew what to do next, but decided to look around the premises a bit before it grew too dark, and then he intended to enter the house and talk with the old housekeeper and visit the room from which it was claimed the shot had been fired. So he strolled thoughtfully out into the rear of the house. The back lot was separated from the houses on either side by a high, old-fashioned picket fence.

As he walked about he fancied he heard a sound as of some one weeping and, looking over into the neighboring lot, saw a young lad of about ten years, who was evidently in great distress. This sight touched the heart of Sharpe, and he vaulted the fence to talk with the boy.

"Ho, lad, what's the matter?" he called cheerily, patting the boy's shoulder.

"Some one shot my dog Prince!" sobbed the

lad. "We just buried him the other day, and I was thinkin' how much I missed him."

"Well, that is tough! Tell me about it."

The boy told him that a few days before he and Prince had been sitting out in their back yard in the sun, when suddenly three shots rang out and Prince dropped dead. The boy couldn't be sure where the shots came from, they were so unexpected. He had saved the bullet, and held it up for Sharpe to see. It was of the same large calibre as the shot that killed Roebuck.

"Are you sure there were three shots?" asked Sharpe.

"Yes, there was three shots, all right. You see, was was sittin' there, when zing! went somethin' through the air, and plugged against that there maple tree, makin' the bark fly. Just at the same time was a loud bang, like a firecracker. And then, jest a second afterward, came another loud bang, but I didn't hear any bullet the last time; but I am sure there was three shots. There is a big hole in that maple tree trunk, if you want to see for yourself."

Sharpe hastened to the tree, and, sure enough, a bullet had recently entered the trunk, penetrating far in out of sight, and making a clean hole. Here, at last, was a valuable clue, for, by studying the slant and angle of the hole, Sharpe could form a fairly accurate idea from what direction, and, possibly, from what spot the bullet had been fired. Of one thing he was now certain—the bullets which had killed the dog and entered the maple tree could not have been fired from John Roebuck's library.

Sharpe was able to establish an imaginary line and trace the course of the bullet backwards from the tree towards the firing point. Following this line, his steps led him back into the rear of the Roebuck premises, to a spot where there had been a bonfire. The ashes were cold, packed down and sodden with recent rains, but, after poking about in them a while, he discovered a blackened cartridge shell. Taking from his pocket the bullet which had killed the dog, he found that it fitted nicely into the shell. A little more searching revealed two more blackened shells. Sharpe was jubilant. Turning to the lad, who had been following him in silent curiosity, Sharpe said:

"Well, boy, I guess we will soon know what killed your dog. Do you remember whether or not this fire was burning that day Prince was killed?"

"Yes, sir, it was. Old Jake, the nigger, was a-burnin' leaves and trash that Miss Thompson was bringin' out to him, and makin' an awful smudge. So bad that ma yelled at him once, but he's so deaf he can't hear nothin'."

"Fine! Now, one more thing. Do you remember what day it was? Did anything else happen that day that you remember?"

The boy thought a moment. "Why, no, only, of course, that was the day old Mr. Roebuck was murdered."

"Exactly! You've helped me a lot, lad. Here, take this dollar, and forget your dog." And Sharpe turned and knocked at the back door of the Roebuck house, and was admitted by the voluble Miss Thompson, who recognized him, and who was quite flattered to have a minister for a caller, even if he did come to the back door.

The next morning Sharpe called again at the office of the district attorney.

"Well, Mr. Detective!" greeted Moore; "I take it from your expression that you have had good luck. Maybe you have solved the mystery?"

"Laying aside all joking, Sam, I have uncovered evidence which I think will clear Marshall Roebuck. Come into your study and I will tell you."

Moore at once grew serious. Perhaps, after all, Sharpe had found something which the police had missed.

Sharpe rapidly narrated his experience with the young lad whose dog had been shot; told of the finding of the bullet hole in the tree; of the discovery of the pile of ashes and what he found therein. He drew from his pocket and deposited upon the table the three blackened shells. Moore excitedly examined them.

"By George," he exclaimed, "I guess I owe you an apology, Mr. Sharpe. You did do clever work, at that."

"But wait, Sam. I'm not half through yet. Let me tell you what happened after I found these. I went into the house to interview old Miss Thompson, and also to get a look at the study. Now, she told me that it was no uncommon thing for uncle and nephew to quarrel about his love affairs, and the will, and other things. Too much importance has been attached to that quarrel. The old man had often threatened to change the will, but had never done it, and probably would not have done it this time, so that particular bit of evidence is not so damning as originally appeared.

"Then I showed her the shells, and asked her if she had ever seen them before. She thought she had. It seems that twenty-two years ago John Roebuck served in the Spanish-American war, and brought home a few relics. The old rifle hanging in his study, the same rifle which young Marshall was seen polishing, was one of the relics. Old John also brought home a lot of Mauser bullets, which were used extensively in that war, and some of these bullets stood on end on the mantel shelf in the library, sort of ornaments, I suppose. A few days ago Miss Thompson started to clean house, and she admits that it was possible, and even probable, that some of these bullets may have fallen into the waste-basket just below the mantel, and that she may have unknowingly carried them out and dumped them onto the fire along with other papers. It could very easily have happened, even in the best regulated of households. A fire was built, the shells exploded, and the bullets flew wild. Old Jake, who was tending the fire, was too deaf to

notice it. One bullet struck the maple tree, another killed the dog Prince. Another, going in an entirely different direction, killed John Roebuck. No doubt the force of the bullet was greatly weakened by the fact that there was nothing substantial back of the cartridge when it exploded, and part of the force was expended in forcing the shell backwards. That explains why it did not enter far into the flesh. It was a fact that the nephew was polishing up the old gun that day, but that was another mere coincidence. Now, then, I am prepared to go on the stand and prove to a jury that Marshall Roebuck is innocent, and that no murder occurred at all."

The district attorney held up his right hand as in taking an oath.

"Never again, Mr. Sharpe, will I allow myself to be convinced by purely circumstantial evidence. I'll have young Roebuck freed just as soon as I can bring it about."

DEPARTED SOULS TO RULE THE WORLD

THROUGH the medium of spiritualistic control, the world will soon be ruled by the greatest minds of all time, dating back to the beginning of history, according to Frederick W. Constantine of Buffalo.

Constantine is secretary of the General Assembly of Spiritualists of the State of New York, which opened its annual convention recently.

Such rapid progress has been made in the last year in spiritualistic communication that it is only a matter of a comparatively short time when practically the entire population of the earth will be mediumistic, Constantine declared in an interview.

As a result, he said, the world will have the benefit of the counseling of such men as Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, Julius Cæsar, Solon, Robert Ingersoll and Theodore Roosevelt.

When this comes to pass, according to Constantine, there will be no more wars, no more crime, no more poverty. And we will have reached a stage comparable to the millennium. Of course, such great men as I have named are in constant communication with mortals, but only to a limited extent at this time," Constantine said.

"Lincoln is perhaps in touch with more mediums than any other great man, owing to his wonderful spirituality.

"Spiritualism has made great strides. The World War gave the movement great impetus through the desire of hundreds of thousands to communicate with those they lost. In the last year our membership has doubled.

"The world's mortal population amounts to a few millions. Its spiritual population is thousands of millions. This overwhelming spiritual pressure from the other side will eventually have its effect.

"In time our kings and presidents, our parliaments and congresses, our business and commercial organizations will be completely dominated by the great minds which have gone before."

TO SEEK LOST RIVER OF GOLD

SEARCHING for a lost river—a river of gold—will be undertaken this year by several prospectors, including oldtimers from the Yukon and Alaska, who are now outfitting for the long journey into the North country. The lost river bed, where the Peace River once flowed, is somewhere in the big bend of the Peace, dissected by a line drawn from Fort St. John to the mouth of the Battle River.

Some years ago an Indian brought into Fort St. John a fair-sized gold nugget which, according to the tale told by oldtimers of the North, he discovered in a stream in the country to the northeast of the post.

Soon after this an old trapper, a white man, who made Fort St. John his headquarters, came into the fort with a quantity of coarse gold which he had washed from some stream in a similar direction to that from which the Indian hailed.

He never visited his trap lines after this, living on the fat of the land in carefree idleness at the post. He often disappeared, whenever his supplies of necessaries ran low, and would be away for a few days, always returning with a fresh supply of gold.

The aged trapper lived in this manner for a number of years. He died, as many trappers and north country men have, on the trail. His body was found frozen. With him went his secret, he never having told to anyone the location of his find. The books of the Hudson Bay Company still contain a large credit account in the name of the old trapper.

Northmen, who tell the story of the mystic Eldorado north of the Peace, declare that the gold was only available after a heavy fall of snow, with which the old fellow apparently washed his mineral. From an analysis of the circumstances generally, it is thought that the place from which the gold was taken was some old river bed where the Peace once flowed, but whether the story is correct or not remains to be proved.

Prospectors, however, are putting up good money to test the truth of the theory that the precious metal does exist somewhere to the north of Clear Hills in large quantities.

The Pardon

By PILAR HERNANDEZ

QUIROGA, the cruel dictator of the Argentine Republic, was filling the city with terror.

Each citizen, particularly if he were possessed of wealth or political influence, lived in daily fear of arrest.

Numbers of workmen, who had come from Europe to work some mines, found themselves without the means to return.

Among these were two young mining engineers from Slavonia, Wilhelm and Frederick.

These two had been boyhood friends, and had studied at the same school of mines.

Together they had come to Buenos Ayres, in the employment of the mining company; and between them subsisted that strong friendship more than brotherly attachment.

The miners called them the "twin brothers," and though unrelated by birth, they resembled each other.

It was said, too, that Wilhelm was the betrothed lover of a very dear sister of Frederick.

Quiroga, who suspected the existence of a conspiracy against him, was making daily arrests, and, from some freak of jealousy, had Wilhelm apprehended and shut up in the cavildo.

As can readily be imagined, his arrest threw Frederick into the greatest alarm and distress.

In his broken Spanish he protested and pleaded for his more than brother before all the officials, and at length obtained audience of Quiroga himself.

With tears in his eyes, the young foreigner besought the dictator to spare Wilhelm's life, offering pledges and proofs of his entire innocence of the charge of conspiracy.

Quiroga heard him in amused and contemptuous silence.

What the tyrant then wanted most was not proofs of innocence, but daily victims with whom to hold in awe his already outraged subjects.

A smile—Quiroga's peculiar flickering smile—played over his dark and cruel countenance.

"You waste your words, young man, and your tears as well," he said, and had him turned out.

From this interview Frederick went away almost distracted.

He walked the streets and neither ate nor slept.

The second morning after the order was signed for Wilhelm's execution in the afternoon.

Those who knew Frederick expected that the tidings would drive him to madness.

But he had no sooner heard it than a sudden set purpose seemed to fall on him.

Hitherto he had worried, entreated, wept; but when he heard the irrevocable death sentence, a deliberate calmness took possession of his mind.

The desperate resolve to save Wilhelm's life, or die with him, had been taken; and the young engineer, though he could weep for his friend, was yet a man of iron nerve and unquailing courage.

He procured a fleet horse and rode to the cavildo where Wilhelm was confined.

It stood near Quiroga's quarters.

Leaving his horse with the captain of the prison guard, who already knew him well, Frederick remarked calmly that the general was going to reprieve Wilhelm, and asked the officer to give the horse to him when the order of release was sent.

This the captain promised to do.

Frederick then proceeded to Quiroga's quarters, and having his former order for admission still in his possession, he passed the sentry, and going along the corridor to the reception-room, found the dictator alone, sitting at a table.

"General," he said, "you know the object of my visit; it is to intercede once more for my poor friend. You have been misinformed concerning him. He is an innocent man. He is quite incapable of joining in a conspiracy. I beg, I implore you to release him."

Quiroga looked at him, and with a wicked smile said:

"You must forget your friend. He dies at three o'clock. When I condemn a man I never pardon him."

"Ah, but he is my only friend in all this strange land," exclaimed the poor fellow, on his knees. "He is my heart's brother. If you take his life, you take mine as well. Senor, he is guiltless. He has not the heart for such a deed; he has not the power. Why, senor, how could Wilhelm conspire? Even now he cannot speak a word of Spanish. My general, spare him!"

"If he doesn't understand Spanish, he will be saved the labor of learning it," said the cold-blooded despot; then raising his voice, he ordered Frederick to retire. "No word of yours can prolong Wilhelm's life one pulse-beat!"

But like lightning Frederick had bounded to his feet, and leveling a cocked pistol at Quiroga's head, exclaimed:

"Is it so? Speak one word and you die! I have come to liberate my friend. I will proceed to do it!"

The astonished dictator sprang up from his seat, but saw in the cold blue eye of the young man a gleam of baleful resolution before which even his own brutal ferocity quailed.

For a moment the two confronted each other and the tyrant trembled.

"What will you then of me?" he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper.

Frederick stepped backwards to the door, and

without taking his eye off Quiroga, turned the key.

"I will have Wilhelm's pardon," he said then in calm, measured tones. "See, senor, I have saved you the trouble of drawing the order for his release. Here it is ready drawn, and with it his passport to leave the country. It wants only your signature. Sign instantly!"

Quiroga glared at the bold intruder.

The bristly short hair above his forehead worked convulsively up and down; and his large mouth drew out at the corners till his teeth were half uncovered, while his hands slowly clutched and unclutched.

"Senor," continued the calm voice of the desperate man, "you have no time to lose. My life you may have and welcome to it. But these papers you must sign. Hesitate while your own pulse beats five strokes more and I will forever deprive you of the power to commit more murders."

The tyrant was at bay. There was no alternative. Dropping back into his seat he signed.

With his pistol still covering its mark the young man stepped backwards again to the door, and opening it, beckoned to the guard, and handing him the paper, said quietly:

"Here is the general's order for the release of the foreigner, Wilhelm. Deliver it at once to the captain of the guard."

He had spoken to the soldier, but never once taken his eye off Quiroga; and now relocking the door and taking a seat, he said in the most quiet manner:

"General, I will now have half an hour's conversation with you."

Upon the margin for the order of release Frederick had written a few words, directing his friend to take the horse which the captain would give him and escape without an instant's delay from the province.

For a full hour now this self-sacrificing man sat and conversed with the grim tyrant across the table, and during that time he told him many unpalatable truths.

"Well, Senor Frederick," Quiroga at length observed, "you have accomplished your object. Your friend is well on his way, if not safe over the border; and I suppose you are ready to retire."

"After I have obtained from you a single promise," said Frederick.

"And what is that?"

"Promise me, on your honor as a Spanish-American, that you will order no pursuit within one hour from this moment."

"I promise it," exclaimed Quiroga abruptly, and took out his watch. "If you can escape in that time, you shall not be harmed."

With polite bows the two separated.

But the young man had been more thoughtful on behalf of his friend than himself.

He had provided no horse for his own escape; and rather than lose the time necessary to obtain one, he trusted to his ability to reach the neighboring mountains on foot, and thus elude pursuit.

Now a South American Spaniard regards his word as more sacred than his life.

Villain though he was, Quiroga would not break his.

Watch in hand, he paced his apartment in almost frantic impatience; and on the second when the hour expired, he leaped into the corridor, shouting:

"Pursue the foreigner Frederick! A hundred ounces of gold to him who brings me his head!"

Pursuit was instantly made in every direction.

A thousand cavalry were soon scouring the plains, and it was not long before the poor fellow saw the hunters on his track.

But he reached a ravine just as a squad of his enemies came galloping up.

Entering a recess, he ran forward and took refuge in the narrow cleft of a huge rock, hoping his pursuers would pass without espying his retreat.

It was a vain hope.

He was discovered, and fighting desperately for his life, soon fell pierced by a dozen lances.

But Wilhelm escaped.

BAT MOST SENSITIVE ANIMAL

THE bat is declared by zoologists to be one of the most wonderful of all animals in its make-up, and there is strong reason to believe it has from one to three senses that no other animal and no human being has. Its wings are a mass of nerves, and it is these that give it the extreme soft, silky feeling as well as serving to create the most sensitive thing in nature. So delicate are these nerves and so responsive to air vibrations, that a bat can be blinded and turned loose in a room where several objects are hanging from the ceiling by cords, and it will fly about among them without touching any object, the nerves catching the "feel" of the object as the bat draws near them. Naturalists have whirled a cane over their heads so rapidly that the cane appeared to be a misty funnel. On their heads they wore caps of vivid colors that bats dislike and would frequently fly at. The bats would rush at them until the whirling cane was reached and then dart between the orbit of the cane without being touched, thus demonstrating a keenness of observation and delicacy of speed judgment unequaled by any other living animal. To make this the more unusual, the bat's eyes are dim and weak, and it depends almost entirely upon the sensitiveness of its wings.

Current News

THUNDER RESTORES VOICE.

C. Lavier of Ogdensburgh, N. Y., was able to talk July 9, after being dumb for nine month as a result of shell shock received while with the Canadian Army.

His voice came back to him last night when a thunder storm shook the steamer Rapids King, on which he was traveling from Toronto Hospital to visit a sister at Montreal.

CHLOROFORMS HIMSELF TRYING TO KILL A CAT

Frank Souders, a Pennsylvania Railroad engineer, lost his life the other day attempting to chloroform an aged cat at his home in Paoli, Pa., while his family was away.

The cat scratched and struggled as he tried to hold a chloroform rag to its nose. Souders fell unconscious and died from the fumes. The cat ran away.

ARMLESS BOY DRAWS.

A year ago Herman Norris of No. 807 Bennet street, Wilmington, Del., then a boy of thirteen years old, was so severely burned by electricity that both his arms had to be amputated. Despite the serious setback, Herman was determined to make good as an artist. While a patient at the Delaware Hospital he learned to draw by holding a pencil between his teeth. Since then a number of his sketches have aroused a good deal of favorable comment. In a recent contest his drawing of a horse was awarded first prize.

FISH BITES SAVED CAPTAIN.

Captain George F. Hagg's life was saved by a codfish biting him. Captain Hagg, sixty-seven, has spent his life fishing. Off the Grand Banks recently he fell on the deck of his trawler, and, stunned, was in danger of slipping into the sea. He fell into a mess of fish. One bit him on the right hand, and the sudden nip brought back consciousness. Then another fish bit the other hand, and the captain was revived enough to hold on until help came. The captain has got out of the hospital, where he was treated for codfish bites. he says.

TAKES BONE FROM OWN HIP.

George Edward Blanchette, of Middletown, N. Y., who spent nine months overseas and was wounded, has succeeded in removing from his hip a piece of bone which has troubled him for some time. Blanchette, who was in Company I, 107th Infantry, has been in fourteen hospitals overseas and in this country, and yet the piece of bone eluded all surgeons. The wound, caused by bullets, has healed several times, only to break out again. The troublesome bone, as it moved about, pricked him like a pin.

Finally, as he lay in bed, Blanchette determined he would get that bone. His brother, John, who served in the 106th Field Artillery, was with him and with his assistance it was soon done. The bone was a small jagged piece, with pin-like points, and Blanchette is keeping it as a souvenir.

PALESTINE CHARIOTS.

Dr. Clarence S. Fisher, curator of the Babylonia section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, will undertake what he described as one of the most important excavations ever made in the Holy Land and the first since the beginning of the World War. He expects to find among other things some of the iron chariots mentioned in the Bible which prevented the children of Israel from capturing Beth-shan, near which city some of the greatest battles of early history were fought.

NEVER RODE ON A TRAIN.

Mrs. Mary Jane Watterson, who celebrated her seventy-ninth birthday one recent Sunday at her home, 12 miles went of Scottsburg, Ind., has never ridden on a train or in an automobile. It is said that she stepped over the Scott County line into Jackson County on one or two occasions. Mrs. Watterson has never had a tooth pulled, or suffered a toothache. Her only photograph was taken about 15 years ago.

Mrs. Watterson is active for her age. Her husband, Henry Watterson, who was a Civil War veteran, is living. They have two children and 15 grand-children. About fifty neighbors surprised her that day, each bringing a well-filled basket.

THREE-YEAR NAP ENDED BY ARKANSAS SLEEPER.

Jim Eslinger, of Fort Smith, Ark., world's champion sleeper, ended his nap, after sleeping for three years. Jim was sitting up the other day in his room at the county hospital, talking to a few friends and relatives. He also talked over the telephone to a friend for the first time since he sank into a stupor.

Eslinger is apparently gaining strength and his chances of recovery appear good. He was a sufferer from pellagra when he came to the hospital eight years ago. His wife died of the disease, but his children recovered. When he sank into slumber his appetite remained with him and his color appeared normal.

GREATEST SALT BED FOUND.

A salt deposit 650 miles long and from 150 to 250 miles broad has been discovered underlying parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, according to the United States biological survey.

It is the largest salt bed in the world and lies about 1,000 feet below the surface of the ground, on an average, with an approximate thickness of 300 feet.

A sample of the salt on exhibition shows it to be in the form of hard crystals, running about 98 per cent. pure salt.

IRON IN THE HUMAN SYSTEM.

A well-known medical authority says that there is enough iron in a man weighing 150 pounds to make four ten-penny nails. This same authority has this to say of other constituents of such a man: "He contains the constituents of 1,200 eggs; there is enough gas in him to make 3,649 cubic feet; his fat would make 75 candles and a good-sized cake of soap. His phosphate content would make 3,064 boxes of matches; there is enough hydrogen in him to fill a balloon to carry him to the clouds. The other constituents of this man would equal six teaspoons of salt, a bowl of sugar and ten gallons of water."

WHERE TREES ARE MILKED.

In British Guiana and the West Indies, particularly on the banks of the River Demerara, there grows a tree known to the natives as the "Hyahya," which yields from its bark and pith a juice slightly richer and thicker than cow's milk. The tree is about 40 feet in height and 18 inches in circumference when full grown, and the natives use its juice as we do milk, it being perfectly harmless and mixing well with water. The Cingalese have a tree they call "Kiriaghuma," which yields a fluid in all respects like milk, while in the forest of Para grows a tree called the "Massenodendron," which gives a milk-like juice. It can be kept for an indefinite time and shows no tendency to become sour. On the other hand, certain trees in the valley of Aragua and in Canagua yield a similar fluid, which, when exposed to the air, begins to form a kind of cheese which very soon becomes sour. In the Canary Islands there is a tree called "Tabaya Dolce," of which the milk, thickened into a jelly, is considered a delicacy.

DEATH RATE AND AGE.

The death rate among males in this country is twice as great at 40 as it is at 20, according to The Nation's Business. This means that 50 per cent. of the vital resistance is gone at that early age, an age when a man is supposed to be at the height of his powers, an age when his vitality should be at least equal to that of a man of 20. Why is it? Infections, poisons, mental strain, physical inactivity, too much food, too little food badly balanced diet—a long list of causes, most of them traceable to the widespread and fallacious notion that a man can have health without working for it!

No man need accept the physical limitations which apparently doom so many to hit the downhill trail almost before they have come to the age that should endow them with the fullest physical and mental power. Right living and right remedial measures, checked up and kept right by means of periodic examinations, forms a combination that would insure a full life to thousands who have long since given up hope of such a thing.

EARS ON THEIR LEGS.

Strange as it may seem, an ant has at least six ears. Aside from their multiplicity they are located in just about the queerest place possible—on the legs. They seem deaf to all sounds made by the vibration of the air, but detect the slightest possible vibrations of solid material. This is supposed to be to their advantage, in that such things as approaching footsteps tell more of the possibility of danger than such sounds as are transmitted through the air. So sensitive are their feet that they detect the impact of a small birdshot dropped on the table from a height of about six inches and about fourteen feet distant from an artificial nest placed at the other end of the table. As curious as are their ears, their noses are even more extraordinary. As the ants spend most of their time in the dark, they must depend largely on scent for their guidance, and in consequence have quite an elaborate array of noses, each for a special purpose. Miss Adele Field believes that their antennæ are composed of a number of noses strung along in a line. Still more strange is the fact that each of these noses can smell only a special thing. The nose on the tip or first joint of the antennæ, it is said, is for recognizing the odor of the home; the one in the second joint is to recognize relatives. The third nose is the pathfinder, and without it the poor ant cannot follow a trail, and soon gets hopelessly lost. The noses on the fourth and fifth joints are for recognizing the eggs and immature ants in the nest. No creature is more tidy than an ant, who cannot tolerate the presence of dirt on her body. These little creatures actually use a number of real toilet articles in keeping themselves clean. No less an authority than Dr. McCook says their toilet articles consist of coarse and fine-toothed combs, hair brushes, sponges and even washes and soap. Their saliva is their liquid soap, and their soft tongues are their sponges. Their combs, like their ears, are fastened to their legs. They stop for a hasty clean-up when they get dirty. But a more leisurely toilet is made when they feel in a loafing mood, and they then lend a helping hand to one another in the process.

OLDEST TREE.

With full appreciation of the beauty and recognition of the majestic size of the giant cypress of Mexico, exception must be taken to the supposition that it is the "oldest tree in the world," says the American Forestry Magazine of Washington. The honor of being the "oldest living thing" belongs to the Gen. Sherman tree in the Sequoia National Park in California. These Mexican cypresses grow to enormous size, and are believed to attain an age of 2,000 years, but it must be remembered that the Gen. Sherman was "a lusty youth of 1,500 summers when Christ was born." Its exact age cannot be determined without counting the rings, but it is probably well in excess of 3,500 years.

A WOMANLESS REPUBLIC.

There is a womanless republic on a peninsula south of Macedonia, in Greece, where ten thousand men live, studying and praying constantly.

Policemen guard the lands constantly, to keep out women pilgrims and other undesirable guests.

This place is called the Mount of Twenty Monasteries, and was used in ancient times as a signaling station, but is now a real republic.

These ten thousand monks govern themselves without interference from Turkey or any other country. There are, however, no government buildings, no president or other office holders.

The police force patrols the coast to keep out women and men who have no permit to enter this most exclusive of countries. Only those who have a letter of permission from the Greek patriarch in Constantinople are allowed to enter the holy place.

Some reports have it that this republic was formed in the ninth century. It is said that the foot of woman has not touched the soil of the place for centuries.

The monks who live on the place work the soil a little, but they depend chiefly upon contributions from pilgrims for their existence. Probably the greatest collection of Biblical manuscripts is in the monasteries of this republic.

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"It is the most interesting place in the world for the student of the Bible," said a traveler who recently visited that country. "I have been there three times already, and I will never tire of going. There are in the monasteries thousands of Greek manuscripts, and hundreds of them are connected with the New Testament.

"Hundreds of Bible students have studied many of these manuscripts very carefully, but there are other manuscripts that have not yet been read carefully. It may be that great discoveries, valuable to the Bible scientists, will emanate yet from this great storehouse of manuscripts."

TO DIG UP RELICS OF BIBLICAL CITY.

Relics of seven or more cities which successively stood on the same site and of nine different civilizations are expected to be uncovered by the excavation of the Biblical City Beth-shan, in Palestine, which is to be undertaken this month. The work will be done under the direction of Clarence S. Fisher, curator of the Egyptian section of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Official permission to undertake this has been received from the Government of Palestine.

Beth-shan is now known as Beisan. It is situated in the valley of Jezreel, just west of the Jordan and not far south of the Sea of Galilee.

More great battles are believed to have taken place within sight of this city than perhaps on any other spot known to history. The investigators hope to find there the key to the whole history of that section of the world written either on marble slabs containing the laws, decrees, treaties and other information or on bronze tablets or written in clay with cuneiform characters.

Beth-shan was a strategic point of value to any of the great military leaders of ancient times who aspired to try his hand at world domination. Beth-shan was one of the places they took and it has been dominated in turn by the Greeks, Romans and Arabs. The investigators expect to find there the strata of perhaps more than seven cities each built upon the ruins of the other as successive waves of invasion swept over and destroyed it. It is within sight of the Mount of Transfiguration, the scene of battles between David and Saul, and the Witch of Endor, who recalled the shade of the prophet Samuel to enlighten Saul, had her home near this ancient city whose secrets now are sought.

It was on the route of all the builders of ancient empires. Beginning 5,000 years ago it suffered the blows of the armies of Sargon, Abraham, Hummurabi, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Thothmes, Saul, David, Alexander, Pompey and Napoleon. Joshua led his troops against Beth-shan but could not take it because its defenders used iron chariots—forerunners of the tanks of the world war. The Crusaders made Beth-shan a point of attack in their vain efforts to conquer Damascus.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. Here are the latest numbers:

NO.

38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Charles F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps" by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery
53 "The Blackjack," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by Beulah Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William Hamilton Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by Caroline Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue in the Dark Room," by Hamilton Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by Ethel Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
71 "The Admiral's Spoons," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
72 "The Canine Clue," by Thos. J. Lally.
73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Andreen.
74 "The Wonder Girl," by Ralph Cummins.
75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
76 "The Spirit Witness," by Chas. F. Oursler.
77 "The Little White Room," by Marc Edmund Jones.
78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by William Kofoed.
80 "A Keyless Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie.
81 "Professor Satan," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "A Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
86 "The Face in the Crowd," by Marc Edmund Jones.
87 "The Man in Room No. 7," by Chas. F. Oursler
88 "Four Ten-Dollar Bills," by Henry G. Howland.
89 "A Challenge to Power," by Dr. Harry Enton.
90 "The House Next-Door," by Police Captain Howard.

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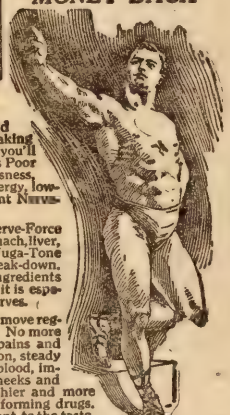

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TWO INVENTIONS THAT INTEREST SURGEONS.

The London (England) correspondent of the Medical Record (New York) writes that two members of the staff of the London Hospital have invented two important additions to the surgeon's art. One of these, a new form of sterilized catgut, is the result of over ten years' expert investigation by Mr. H. P. Morley, the chief of the Ligature Department, who has, it is said, produced a catgut that is not only absolutely sterilized but will "persist" or last for definite periods of ten, twenty, thirty, or forty days in the wound as the surgeon may require, and then become rapidly absorbed after the time specified.

The second invention is that of Mr H. S. Soutar, head of the surgical unit of the hospital, and consists of an eyeless needle. The needle has in place of an eye a minute hole bored longitudinally in the head. An end of the catgut is placed in this and sealed in so that the surgeon can sew with a single thread. Both the inventors have placed their inventions at the disposal of the London Hospital.

A GAS ATTACK ON DESTRUCTIVE BUGS.

The deadly fumes of hydrocyanic acid gas are used in eradicating objectionable bugs and fungi from citrus fruit trees. As a couple of whiffs of this gas spell sure death to the workme , great care has to be exercised in treating the trees. A graduated scale is so painted on the outside of the canvas bag that is employed for the administering of the gas, and that forms the subject of the accompanying view, as to indicate how much gas is required for any given tree. As the canvas bag is placed over the tree, the graduated scale indicates the size of the tree; and by subsequent reference to the poison record on the automatic engine which makes and distributes the gas, the attendant can accurately determine exactly how much poison gas to give each tree. The treatment occurs in the late afternoon and the canvas bag is wrapped around each tree in turn for a period of forty minutes, which is considered ample time to gas the undesirable bugs and growths.

"END YOUR RHEUMATISM

Like I Did Mine" — Says Pastor Reed: Wife Also Rid of Neuritis

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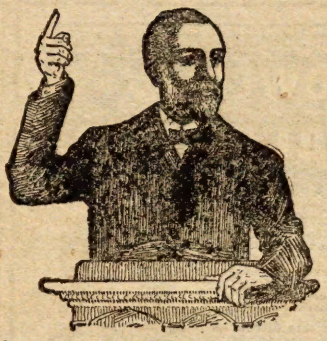

"Don't Believe That Old Humbug About 'Uric Acid' Being the Cause of Rheumatism — It's Not So!"

Emphatically asserting that thousands of unfortunate sufferers have been led into taking wrong treatments under the old and false belief that "Uric Acid" causes rheumatism, Pastor H. W. Reed says:

"As do some of our highest medical authorities, I now know that 'Uric Acid' never did and never will cause rheumatism! But it took me many years to find out this truth. I learned how to get rid of my rheumatism and recover my health and strength, through reading 'The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism,' a work written by an authority who has scientifically studied the cause and treatment of rheumatism for over twenty years. It was indeed a veritable revelation!

"I had suffered agony for years from rheumatism and associated disorders, and Mrs. Reed was tortured with the demon neuritis almost beyond endurance. We had read and talked so much about 'Uric Acid' that our minds seemed poisoned. But the 'Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism' made it all clear to us and now we are both free from the suffering and misery we endured so many years. I believe I was the hardest man in the world to convert! For me to discard the old 'Uric Acid' theory, and what I now know to be absolutely false, for the new, scientific understanding of the causes and cure of rheumatism, was like asking me to change my religious beliefs! But I did change, and it was a fortunate day for me and mine when I did so."

NOTE: "The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism" referred to above by Pastor Reed lays bare facts about rheumatism and its associated disorders overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past. It is a work that should be in the hands of every man or woman who has the slightest symptoms of rheumatism, neuritis, lumbago or gout. Any one who sends name and address to H. P. Clearwater, 534 F Street, Hallowell, Maine, will receive it by mail, postage paid absolutely free. Send now, lest you forget the address! If not a sufferer, cut out explanation and hand it to some afflicted friend.

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"Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

After hair growth

INDIAN'S SECRET OF HAIR GROWTH

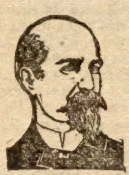

Photo when bald.

"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asseverated would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was astonished and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly.

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade. I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotalko, and later had the recipe put into practical form by a chemist.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved."

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The water from the ditches seeps under the paper mulch remaining many days longer than when exposed to the burning sun of this section.

For several years a number of cantaloupe growers have experimented with paper mulching, which has also been carried on to some extent in the pineapple plantations in Hawaii. It was found that the vines produced cleaner and sweeter fruit when allowed to ripen on the clean paper floor, and that there was an absence of pests. The question of a suitable material is the real solution to the sucered. There is a 50 per cent. saving in labor for cultivation and irrigation.

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